

THROUGH A DAUGHTER'S EYES:
Understanding the Influence of Black Fathers on Their Daughters' Conceptualizations of
Fatherhood and Womanhood

by

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Dedication

To my family.

Acknowledgements

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Abstract

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Based on 79 qualitative, in-depth interviews of 40 African-American college-educated women between the ages of 18 and 22, this dissertation compares how women from two-parent households and single-mother-headed households construct narratives of their experiences with their fathers. The dissertation accomplishes three objectives: 1) to highlight the means by which Black women *actively* work to deconstruct and navigate dominant images of fatherhood and Black fatherhood; 2) to discuss the contribution of Black fathers to the daughters' sense of womanhood (as theorized by respondents); and 3) to link the findings with federal policy initiatives regarding fatherhood.

I find that the women neither fully embraced nor rejected traditional paternal roles, such as the breadwinners and head of household. Instead, they made sense of dominant discourse by incorporating their actual experiences with their fathers into their ideal narratives regarding fatherhood, particularly Black fatherhood. I also find that social fathers are significant to the women's conceptualizations of fatherhood, as many provide alternative images of male contributions to family life.

The women in my study employ fathers in their narratives of Black femininity. They argue that their fathers contributed to their abilities as African Americans and women to navigate public spaces and intimate relationships. I also find that the women in my study express great agency as they contemplated their daughter-father relationships. Women with disconnected relationships with their fathers use their perspectives on forgiveness and reconciliation to afford themselves power and control within their daughter-father relationships.

Overall, the women's reflections on mainstream and alternative forms of fathering and daughter-father relationships have important implications for social policies related to Responsible Fatherhood. I argue that Responsible Fatherhood policies should be child-focused and reflect the realities of daughter-father relationships.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The archetype of the “deadbeat dad” or absentee father is a common representation of Black¹ fatherhood. The implication of this is that Black children are fatherless. Keisha (an African American woman I interviewed who grew up in a single-mother-headed household) described public perceptions of Black fathers this way, “Their stereotype is like Black fathers don't never stick around.”

But is the stereotype of fatherless Black child true? Several studies find that many African-American fathers do not live in the same households as their children. With 48 percent of African American children living in single-mother-headed households and 35 percent of Black children living in poverty (Fields, 2003; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009), the emphasis of researchers, policy makers, and mainstream America has been on low-income, non-residential Black fathers’ and their contributions to children and families. Further, the rates of non-residential fathering among African-American men have prompted many organizations, researchers, and community activists to declare that there is a “crisis” of Black fatherhood. However, research also indicates that never-married Black fathers are still more likely to be involved than non-residential

¹ I use Black and African-American interchangeably throughout the text.

fathers of other races (Argys et al. 1998; Danziger and Radin, 1990). Further, Black fatherhood encompasses more than the experiences of low-income, absentee fathers. There are married fathers of various class backgrounds, fathers who co-parent, single fathers, and social fathers. The experience of Black fathers is complex, and absence is an inaccurate description of Black paternal involvement.

When I asked Keisha if she agreed with the stereotype that Black fathers do not stick around, she responded:

For me, like growing up in Detroit it was true. I know maybe two people whose father still stays with them to now. Everybody else father is somewhere else doing other things.

Keisha's sentiments reflect the challenge of discussing Black fatherhood. Her reflections about the men in her life highlight the reality that there are African-American fathers who live in separate households than their children and may also be emotionally unavailable. When I asked Keisha why she thought so many people in her family and community had disconnected relationships with their fathers she responded,

I don't know. I want to say black men, but not all of them are like that. Sometimes it doesn't work out with the mother, but then sometimes the child doesn't get to see their father either, and then it's like, you're hurting the child too.

Her experiences indicate that there are different reasons for paternal disengagement, but that children experience the consequences. At various points during her interview, Keisha shared that while she experienced extended periods of time without contact with her father, they also shared some instances of loving interaction. Further, her father faced employment and substance abuse challenges which influenced his family relationships. As a result, Keisha's narrative represents a lifetime of complicated

interactions that would be unfairly surmised as an absentee daughter-father relationship. The reality of her situation, and others like her, is that many Black fathers are not completely in or out of their children's lives. The complex nature of many father-child relationships requires that researchers strike a balance between analyzing family relationships which may reinforce stereotypes while simultaneously giving voice to alternative father roles and behaviors.

So how do we disentangle fact from fiction when studying Black fathers?

Drawing on themes from Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1952), Burton and Synder (1998) asks researchers to consider the ways that poor fathers have been assigned the label of "deadbeat" as their primary visible form and have their other paternal attributes rendered invisible (Burton, 2002; Burton & Synder, 1998). They use the following quote from Ellison to illustrate invisible and visible social influences on Black men's macro- and micro-level interactions:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a trace or a special effect. I have at least a physical referent. I have bone and flesh and sinew and gristle. I have angers and passions. The problem is my intellect. People have a hard time seeing past it. They see my body as if it were just an effect of my mind, a magic-lantern projection, an image cast on a screen by a bright burning bulb. I am invisible, then, not because of some accident of biology, some genetic mishap, but because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of the people who look at me (Ellison, 1952, p. 3).

It is important for researchers to understand the visible and invisible aspects of Black fathering and Black father-child relationships. This is essential not only for more accurate representations of Black fathers, but also because family policies are often influenced by the results of family studies.

My study builds on Burton and Synder's suggestion that researchers investigate invisible aspects of Black fatherhood. I explore the "disposition of the eyes of the people who look at" Black fathers by considering which elements of Black fatherhood become visible through the eyes of daughters. For this study I interviewed young African American women who grew up in two-parent or single-mother headed households about their daughter-father relationships.

The narratives of the women in my study answer the following questions: How do African-American women conceptualize fatherhood? How do African-American women understand Black femininity as it is related to their relationships with their fathers? In what ways can the women's reflections on their experiences with their fathers inform family policy? Further, their reflections highlight how they perceive their fathers (in) visibility within their family units influence, as well as their own sense of visibility within their relationships with their fathers and within community and broader cultural contexts.

In this study I address the following shortcomings of previous research on father-child relationships, particularly African American daughter-father relationships. First, most studies neglect to explore how adult children understand the dynamics of the father-child relationship, or how they define their and their fathers' family roles. Second, much of the research related to father-child interactions, particularly in married households, is focused on white middle class families, with much of the research on African-American families focusing upon low-income single-mother-headed households. The women I interview represent working class and low-middle class backgrounds and come from two-parent as well as single-mother-headed households. Third, most studies of daughter-

father relationships explore the influence of fathers on daughters' socio-emotional and cognitive outcomes. While it is important to study outcomes, I find it necessary to also address the meaning daughters attach to fatherhood and the daughter-father relationship.

The narratives of the women in this study add depth to what we know about Black fathers and even Black women. Family scholars and policy makers have given little attention to daughters' beliefs and worldviews regarding fatherhood and father-child relationships. This study pushes the boundaries of scholarship on fathers, Black families, and even policy to encourage readers to consider how and why fathers matter to the lives of daughters. It also addresses the ways by which daughters understand and respond to the "crisis" of Black fatherhood and societal notions of fatherless Black children.

In the following section I will address two questions. First, what do we know about Black fatherhood? And second, how have researchers' methodological and theoretical orientations influenced our knowledge base? After a discussion of the research that provides the foundation for this study, I will discuss, in more detail, the goals and findings of this project.

Black Men and Fathering

Over the past few decades, fatherhood in the United States has come to be defined in less rigid terms. Gender role ideologies related to fatherhood have evolved to include more nurturing care-giving roles, in addition to more dominant father role expectations, such as fathers giving their children legal legitimacy and providing as heads of households (Gerson, 1993; Lamb 2000). Despite these overall changes, men across class and race have embraced and performed dominant and alternative forms of fatherhood in response to social constraints and cultural influences (Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000).

However, much of what we know and is publically available about Black fathers is based on the experiences of low-income, non-residential fathers.

Crippled by de-industrialization and the turn to a service economy, Black working class men have faced bleak employment opportunities. In 1960, 70 percent of all Black workers were working class, but by 1990 the percentage of Blacks in working class occupations had decreased to 51 percent (Billingsley, 1992). The movement of jobs from urban areas left many Black men and families isolated in impoverished, hyper-segregated urban spaces (Wilson, 1987; Massey & Denton, 1993).

Over the past few decades marginalized Black males' participation in underground economy activities such as drug dealing, along with punitive laws and disproportional rates of arrest, serve to limit their family life participation (Blumstein, 1993, Coyle, 2002). Challenges related to incarceration and participation in underground economies restrict the resources and time allocation of many Black fathers. Current statistics indicate that one in three Black men will go to prison at some point in their lifetime, as compared to one in seventeen White men, and that Black men are more likely to have a prison record than they are to earn a college degree or to enlist in the military (Western & Pettit, 2006).

Although the challenges marginalized Black men face are real and apparent, the overriding public representations of all Black men and fathers are those of criminals and the unemployed. The "deadbeat dad," along with the "welfare queen," persist as dominant images of Black parenthood (Collins, 2004; Hill, 2004). The image of the deadbeat dad exists despite the significant number of alternative family arrangements and supportive family roles Black fathers perform in response to unemployment and other

obstacles (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Coley, 1998; Hamer, 2001; Johnson, 2000; Manning & Smock, 2000; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Researchers have responded to trends in Black male unemployment and incarceration in urban spaces by exploring the role of de-industrialization in the creation of the “underclass” (Hill, 2004; Wilson 1987). Wilson’s (1987) underclass term refers to socially and spatially isolated poor African-Americans with limited job and economic opportunities, and by extension limited social opportunities for positive role models.

Studies which explore Black family responses to poverty and structural restrictions have produced a significant amount of research on trends in Black paternal involvement. They reveal which types of paternal involvement are important for child outcomes and provide generalizable data about core trends that are easily translatable into policy recommendations and considerations. Studies of poor urban Black fathers’ paternal involvement often focus on non-resident fathers, highlighting their indirect financial contributions and the influence their engagement on children’s cognitive and socio-emotional wellbeing².

According to studies of African-American fathers, these men cite financial support and employment as the most prominent barriers to their fatherhood and paternal involvement (Bowman, 1990; Bowman & Sanders, 1998; Cochran, 1997; Danziger & Radin, 1990; Johnson, 2000). Limited employment opportunities lead some fathers to feel insecure about their ability to contribute according to “mainstream” expectations of fathers. Unemployment and low income not only decrease some fathers’ confidence in

² Examples of direct paternal involvement include activities such as such as caretaking, neglect, or play and indirect involvement includes material support and relationships with their children’s mothers (Lamb, 2010).

their ability to fulfill traditional father roles, but also lead to psychological stressors that can influence their ability to be supportive (Bowman & Sanders, 1998; McLloyd, 1990). Additionally, fathers' ability to offer financial support in the form of child support or fulfilling other financial needs such as purchasing children's clothes often influences the type of relationship they have with their children. In some cases fathers of limited financial means have antagonistic relationships with the mothers of their children due to their lack of ability to contribute to the household (Anderson, 1989; Waller, 2002).

Paternal residence is another topic of particular concern. Most fatherhood studies argue that the best child outcomes are among children who live in households with both of their biological, married parents, (Carlson, 2006; Harris, 1998; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). However, some have found that fathers' place of residence is not a main determinant of involvement (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). For instance, Black et al. (1999) find few significant differences in child behavioral and cognitive outcomes between children who live in low-income, urban households with resident fathers and those without resident fathers. In fact, families with non-resident fathers may differ little from intact families in terms of structure and poverty.

Despite the barriers that non-residence presents to never-married Black fathers, they are still more likely to be involved than live-away fathers of other races (Argys et al. 1998). Danziger and Radin (1990) find in their study of teen mother families that minority non-resident fathers have the highest paternal involvement. Such results call for an understanding of the ways fathers can participate in children's lives in manners that positively affects their children's outcomes, despite place of residence.

Many African-American fathers choose less traditional means of involvement that fit their residential, financial, and socio-economic status (Cochran, 1997; Hamer, 2001). According to Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1999), urban African-American fathers often “bundle” their involvement. More specifically, these fathers are either involved in various aspects of their children’s lives or are completely uninvolved, leading some fathers to “part time father” (Anderson, 1989), or emphasize aspects of fathering, such as caregiving, that are more feasible (Hamer, 2001).

As a consequence of working to understand the contributions of Black men to fragile families,³ much of our knowledge regarding them centers on paternal residence, financial contributions, and their relationships with their children’s mothers. This information is important for family policies that target fragile families and certainly allows policy makers and family service providers to contemplate solutions for child outcomes. Additionally, these studies have been important for illuminating factors which limit or constrain Black father involvement, such as unemployment and limited income (Maldonado, 2006), multi-partner fertility, and tenuous ties with romantic partners (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Cherlin, 1998; Edin & Kefalas, 2006; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Waller, 2002).

A focus on poverty and outcomes leads to particular results depending on the information source. For instance, the state’s perspective often examines fathers according to their role as a provider (*Framing the Future*, 2005; Haney & March, 2003). Public policies focus on the importance of the frequency, amount, and types of fathers’

³ Defined as families consisting of unmarried parents and their children who are more likely to separate and to live in poverty than married couples with children, the concept of fragile families includes fathers as integral members of family networks and explores father contributions to the financial and relational stability within families.

financial contributions, often constraining the concept of fatherhood to a traditional nuclear family role (Haney & March, 2003). Studies of mothers examine how single mothers and their children fare, with an emphasis on understanding fathers as providers and as partners (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994 & 2002). Studies from the fathers' perspective often examine how fathers respond to expectations of the state and of their children's mothers, with particular emphasis on how they reconcile expectations of providing financial support with their own financial situations (particularly among low income and minority fathers). Notably absent from many of these approaches is the perspective of the children. Additionally, what are we losing by understanding the Black father-child relationship through an emphasis on single-mother-headed household structures, urban settings, and poverty?

The focus on low-income, non-residential urban Black fathers skews our knowledge base regarding Black fatherhood and father-child relationships. Narrow representations of Black fatherhood misrepresent how Black fathers *actually* parent and highlight weaknesses rather than strengths, downplaying the complexities and challenges associated with Black fathering. For instance, emphasis on the financial contributions of fathers often comes at the expense of understanding the emotional aspects of fathering. Rather than understanding how Black men relate emotionally to their children, partners, and family members, we are persuaded to believe that responsible fathering is primarily a financial investment. Consequently, we are left with pictures of hopeless fathers who are labeled as "weak," "deadbeat," or "irresponsible" because of their inability to provide financial support for their families (Collins, 2004; Hamer, 2001). These images disguise alternative ways that Black fathers are involved in their children's lives. By concentrating

on what fathers do not contribute, lay discourse, and even research avoids a detailed examination of Black fathers' contributions to family life and instead focuses on behaviors related to financial provision and the legal establishment.

Involved Black fathers across class and custodial status remain invisible (Coles & Green, 2010; O'Connor & White, 2006). For decades African American fathers have performed the nuclear family model of child-rearing and have practiced varying forms of Black fathering (Billingsley, 1992; Coles & Green, 2010; Hamer, 2001; O'Connor & White, 2006; White, 2008). These forms include (but are not limited to) single fathers, fathers with multiple sets of children and residences, gay fathers, fathers in two-parent households, feminist fathers, and social fathers. For instance, many middle class Black fathers endeavor to set themselves apart from low-income fathers by proving their ability to be breadwinners and to maintain two-parent households. Yet, like low-income Black fathers, some middle class fathers find it difficult to contribute economically to their children and find that economic situations influence their decisions to pursue marriage and/or to live with the mothers of their children. Black middle class fathers also face unique labor market challenges. Ironically, even after completing college, African American men have higher chances of being laid off from their jobs than Black male high school graduates (Wilson, Tienda, & Wu, 1995). However, there are very few studies of Black middle class fathers and family life.

Critique of a research emphasis on marginalized fathers and families is hardly new. The initial responses to the Moynihan report⁴ from scholars of Black family life⁵

⁴ Daniel P. Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action* (1975), also known as the Moynihan report, argued that "Black families operated from the weak male and strong woman" framework, by which Black women controlled families and emasculated Black men who were disconnected from

point to early critiques of limited definitions of Black family characteristics. They often emphasized the strengths and adaptive nature of African-American families. Labeled revisionists, these scholars highlighted strength based approaches to studying Black fathers and families (Hill, 2005). In addition, they advocated for knowledge of Black families to extend beyond single-mother headed households or viewing them from a problem or deficit based approach (Billingsley, 1992). Further they advocated for approaches which focus on the adaptive nature of families to structural constraints and highlights non-traditional contributions of fathers.

More contemporarily race and gender scholars are “revising the revisionists” (Hill 2004) by arguing that there are strengths as well as challenges related to Black family life that are complicated and require in-depth exploration of social institutions and culture that just focusing on strength models may ignore (Hill, 2004; Young, 2004). For instance, several Black feminist studies draw on intersectionality or multiracial feminism to explore the role of race, class, and gender in creating controlling images and hegemonic expectations for fathers and families (Collins, 2004; Hill, 2004; Neal, 2005; White, 2008). As it relates to fatherhood, Black feminist studies examine the process by which racialized gender images influence the roles and meanings Black men and their families make of fatherhood and male family roles. Feminist scholars provide interesting inroads in their study of the multiple ways Black fathers (could) nurture their children and break

families and who were unable to fulfill traditional paternal roles (Collins, 2004; Hill, 2004; Rainwater & Yancey, 1967). There were several research responses to the report. Some researchers highlighted Black families’ cultural strengths in response to racism and other social obstacles; others focused on structural explanations (such as unemployment and segregation). However, most researchers avoided cultural analyses (Franklin, 1997; Hill, 2004).

⁵ There is a rich tradition of Black family studies which precede the Moynihan report. These studies contended with the vestiges of slavery for Black family life and the influence of African culture. See Franklin (1997) for a more extensive exploration of the transition in topical and theoretical approaches to studying Black family life.

from traditional paternal roles. These scholars illuminate some of the areas which remain understudied, particularly the influence of gender roles and ideologies within Black families and the meaning-making strategies of African Americans.

The Black father-daughter relationship presents an ideal family relationship for examining our gaps in knowledge regarding Black fatherhood. It allows for the exploration of cross-gender interactions, gender ideology, and an understudied Black father-child relationship. Existing data related to Black father-daughter relationships also illuminate some of the aforementioned challenges related to our knowledge regarding Black fatherhood. In fact, most information on African-American daughter-father relationships appears in self-help and trade publications. Publications like Barras' (2000) *Whatever Happened to Daddy's Little Girl?* explore the relationship from a healing perspective (Barras, 2000; Robinson, 2004). Barras describes behaviors common among women who grew up without a father in the household, particularly those with little to no contact with their fathers; she describes these women as having Fatherless Woman Syndrome. There are also some songs in the modern rhythm and blues genre, like "No Daddy" and "Father in You" by Teairra Mari and Mary J. Bilge, respectively, that outline behaviors associated with women who grow up without a father in the household. These songs and authors tend to imply that the lack of edifying daughter-father interaction leads daughters to engage in unhealthy sexual interactions and male-seeking behavior. But what do previous studies of African-American daughter-father relationships reveal?

First, Black father involvement has important implications for daughters' lives. Several studies find that paternal involvement is linked to positive academic, psycho-social, and risky behavior outcomes for daughters (Cooper, 2009). Supportive daughter-

father relationships are linked to positive academic engagement and self-esteem (Cooper, 2009). It also influences how equipped urban, African American adolescent females feel to resist drugs (Boyd, Ashcraft, & Belgrave, 2006). Additionally, evidence from quantitative and qualitative studies of African-American females indicates that aspects of the daughter-father relationship can have implications for daughters' romantic and sexual relationships (Cochran, 1992; Harris Peterson, 2006; Hill 2005), with positive paternal involvement being linked to lower risky sexual behavior (Harris Peterson, 2006).

According to Hill (2005), when lack of paternal involvement is coupled with educational and economic marginalization, many poor African-American young women seek support and validation from a male partner. Cochran (1992) also finds that the nature of the daughter-father relationship influences women's attitudes toward males as well as the quality of their male-female relationships. These studies of outcomes related to daughter-father relationships reveal the influence of fathers for positive outcomes. However, we know little about the meanings that daughters attach to the *processes* which produce these outcomes.

When meaning-making is explored within the daughter-father context, we find that daughters value fathers fulfilling care-giving and nurturing roles, as well as increasing quality of contact (Johnson, 2006; Way & Gillman, 2000). Although limited in number, some studies have researched the multiple ways that Black daughters reconstruct their personal history to incorporate uninvolved fathers into their narratives. In her study of African American teen mothers, Kaplan (1997) finds that some women with uninvolved fathers addressed the loss they felt at the fathers' absence from the household by focusing on their positive experiences with their fathers. She argues that

these women viewed their fathers as “models of perfection.” These acts, which Kaplan describes as the “halo effect,” were “strategies to restructure their emotional feelings so they could overlook their father’s lack of involvement and create all-powerful fathers (Kaplan 1997, 114).” Similarly, Armstead (2010) finds that African American women with uninvolved fathers describe their fathers in ways to include themselves as important figures in their lives. The results of the aforementioned studies point to the importance of understanding not only psycho-social, cognitive, or sexual outcomes associated with daughter-father relationships, but also the process by which daughters make meaning of their fathers, themselves, and their life experiences in light of daughter-father interactions.

From these studies we find that there is a need for more insight into how daughters conceptualize their experiences with their fathers. These studies of daughter-father relationships do not provide in-depth exploration of the meanings women attach to fatherhood or their understandings of the implications of the relationship for their lives. It is also unclear what the discourse surrounding the “crisis of the black father” and other gendered representations of Black family roles means for how daughters make sense of themselves and their fathers.

Exploring beliefs and worldviews functions as a critical empirical means to understanding Black daughter-father relationships. A cultural sociological approach, meaning-making of beliefs and worldviews is a way of exploring the process by which people make sense of everyday life. This approach is ideal for studying Black daughter-father relationships as it has been used in recent urban sociological studies of Black men. Young (2004) finds that focusing on beliefs and worldviews provides for deeper,

theoretical understandings of the ways in which Black men place themselves in the world and within their interpersonal relationships (Young, 2004). Within urban sociology this approach is part of an effort to break away from simply focusing on values or behaviors, and to explore the meaning people attach to various life roles, and their constraints and possibilities. This is an important research approach for contextualizing behavior-based findings.

Beliefs and worldviews as a theoretical orientation is critical for my study as I endeavor to push readers to think beyond fathering practices to delve into the how daughters decide what is meaningful and valuable about those experiences. However, there is very little empirical precedent for studying African-American daughter-father relationships, particularly from a beliefs and worldviews perspective.

This study seeks to contribute to that gap. In order to delve into the beliefs and worldviews of women in my study I use narrative work as an analytical strategy. Using Martin's (1996) definition, I define narrative work as the work the women in my study do to reconcile previous experiences with their fathers with "how things are supposed to happen, according to cultural and interpersonal scripts, and how one wants them to be (Martin, 1996 p.18)." Martin's (1996) conceptualization of narrative work is useful for my considerations of the narratives of the women in my study. With narrative work I examine how the women juggled multiple cultural scripts, or societal expectations for behaving, regarding mainstream fatherhood, Black fatherhood, and femininity in their meaning-making of their relationships with their fathers.

Organization

The goals of this dissertation are threefold: 1) to highlight the means by which Black women deconstruct and navigate dominant images of fatherhood and Black fatherhood; 2) to discuss the contribution of Black fathers to the daughters' sense of womanhood (as theorized by respondents); and 3) to link the findings with federal policy initiatives regarding fatherhood.

After summarizing my methodology in Chapter 2, I analyze the women's reflections on fatherhood. In Chapter 3 I explain the women's family structures and processes of their family life, particularly as it relates to paternal involvement. The following categories: 1) supportive residential fathers, 2) distant/uninvolved residential fathers, 3) supportive non-residential fathers, and 4) intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers best encapsulate the types of paternal involvement the women in my study experienced. In addition, multiple family relationships, like siblings and extended kin relationships, influenced how the women thought about their daughter-father relationships.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of the meaning the women in my study make of mainstream father roles. They supported mainstream conceptualizations of fatherhood which include residence and financial support, in addition to more nurturing father roles. They made sense of dominant discourse by incorporating their actual experiences with their fathers into their ideal narratives regarding fatherhood. While their support for ideal father roles were similar, there were key differences in the meaning the women attached to the roles and the range of options they considered necessary for accomplishing tasks related to these roles. Women with non-residential fathers were more likely than women

with residential fathers to discuss how alternative forms of paternal involvement can satisfy mainstream expectations.

In Chapter 5, I investigate the women's views regarding Black fatherhood. The majority of the women in this study highlighted obstacles such as unemployment and racism as factors which hinder Black fathers' involvement. However, they did not excuse fathers from paternal responsibility. They were aware of structural challenges which Black fathers face, but believed that those obstacles should not keep fathers from being involved. Further, their broad definition of family allowed them to conceptualize and desire social fathers. Social fathers are significant to the women's conceptualizations of fatherhood, as many of the women provided alternative images of male contributions to family life.

In Chapter 6 I explore the women's recollections of their fathers' messages about Black femininity. They believe that fathers play an important role in how they express Black femininity. They consider fathers to be pivotal to their development of Black femininity, particularly their expressions of lady-like and nurturing behavior. In Chapter 7 I focus on the experiences of women with the most distant daughter-father relationships. I explore how they discuss forgiveness, reconciliation, and maintenance of relationships with their biological fathers. The women use their perspectives on forgiveness and reconciliation to afford themselves power and control within their disconnected daughter-father relationships. In Chapter 8, I conclude with an analysis of the implications of this study for contemporary federal policies related to Responsible Fatherhood.

The women's personal and collective narratives provide insight into the implications of fathers' presence and absence for the lives of women and girls. Some of their statements could be understood as mainstream and hetero-normative. However, their experiences and actions reveal a more complex reality. For example, many had social fathers who they believed help them with personal and family needs, whether they lived with their father or not. Additionally, women with close relationships with their residential fathers shared how their fathers contributed to their nuclear family as well as extended family and community networks. Further, when biological fathers were unavailable the women were agentic about how they pursued forgiveness and interacted with their fathers.

Many researchers, family policy experts, and those generally interested in Black fatherhood want to know the implications of fatherhood for the lives of children. This study contributes an answer to that question. Studying beliefs and worldviews helps policymakers identify which options people are likely to pursue (Young, 2004). In this study I uncover options daughters pursued and their understandings of options their fathers chose. Further their narratives provide critical insight into how people (daughters) make sense of personal relationships in light of community and group realities.

Chapter 2

DATA AND METHODS

Since in-depth interviews are ideal for gathering detailed information regarding how people interpret events, describe perspectives, and express understandings of complex occurrences (Weiss, 1994), they are the most compatible method for assessing how African American women understand and define fatherhood and womanhood, make sense of their interactions with their fathers, and describe their agency within the daughter-father relationship. In this chapter I explain how I selected my study participants, describe their general characteristics, and outline my interview and analysis methods.

Sample Recruitment

From March 2007 until March 2008, I completed 79 interviews with 40 African-American women. The women were between the ages of 18 and 22 and attended a large, elite Midwestern public university⁶. According to the university's enrollment rate statistics, during the period of my data collection, the undergraduate population was almost twenty-five thousand; about one-thousand of those students were African-

⁶ Three of the women in my study were enrolled in summer programs at the university; their home universities were similar in prestige, but not type or size.

American women. All of the respondents self-identified as Black or African American. Their biological fathers and biological mothers also identified as Black or African American. In order to participate, the women must have lived in the same household as their biological father and mother all of their lives prior to graduating from high school or lived with only their biological mother for all of their lives prior to graduating from high school⁷.

The age range and education status for the women is ideal, for my purposes, for two reasons. First, the women were close enough to adolescence and childhood for their childhood memories to be vivid. They no longer lived with their parents as their primary residence and were establishing independent lives. However, while their residential status and level of independence had shifted, they were still actively grappling with and making meaning of their childhood and adult relationships with their parents. Second, studies of upwardly mobile, Black women in emerging adulthood are rare; most research focuses on “down and out” women who are often teen mothers. Although valuable, the focus on teen mothers limits our knowledge of how young African-American women think about family life

I used snowball recruitment methods to recruit my interview subjects. I emailed: 1) organizations on campus that target African Americans; 2) student email lists associated with the Multicultural Affairs and the Black studies department; and 3) listservs for summer programs that traditionally have large numbers of African American students. I recruited people face-to-face at summer term classes, research centers, and

⁷ I interviewed three women who I classify as having grown up in a single-mother-headed household, but lived in the same household with their fathers for the first few years of their lives. These women had no memory of their fathers living in the household.

events targeting African American students, such as barbeques for new students. At these events, I formally and informally introduced myself and distributed fliers. In addition, I posted fliers on campus in locations that received a lot of student traffic, such as bus stops, cafeterias, coffee shops, libraries, computer labs, and buildings with large numbers of required courses. By advertising in a variety of locations and contacting students enrolled in required courses, I hoped to reach some participants who were not active or connected to Black organizations on campus, particularly women who may not have participated in Black organizations, either because of ideological differences or because of time constraints due to their studies or job commitments. This method of recruitment put me in touch with women from the backgrounds I desired for my study, as were from working class backgrounds and were working to help pay college-related expenses.

I received over 30 emails and phone calls from potential participants within 72 hours of beginning my recruitment. Many women expressed that they were excited to participate in the study of such an under-discussed and under-researched topic. For instance, one woman emailed me the following message: “I would be interested in participating in your study, and I would also be interested in receiving further information after the study is completed.” Her email was typical of many people who contacted me. I recently received an email from a woman who did not participate in the study, but remembered my recruitment materials. She wanted to know if I had published my results because she wanted to read my study to help improve her understanding of Black family relationships. Some participants said they wanted to participate in the study because of the incentive (which was ten dollars per interview). However, most women had other reasons, including having the opportunity to talk for the first time about their relationship

with their father or the opportunity to contribute their unique experiences with their fathers.

Over the course of my recruitment, 264 women contacted⁸ me about their interest in my study. I prescreened 187 women and had limited contact with the other 77 women. The two most common reasons of ineligibility were: 1) family class background (many were from middle or upper middle class backgrounds) and 2) family type (some had divorced parents who remarried, were raised by their fathers, or taken care of by extended kin). Of the 187 women I prescreened, I interviewed the 40 women who met my selection criteria. As a result, my data includes interviews with twenty young women who grew up in single-mother-headed households and twenty who lived with both biological parents for their entire childhood.

During the pre-screening process, I was surprised by the women's informality and the hours they kept. It was not uncommon for the women to call me between 9pm and midnight. Many women called after they completed their homework and jobs. Others preferred to call me when their cell phone minutes were free, which was often after 9pm. I was particularly challenged as I attempted to schedule and confirm follow-up interviews. Several women had cancelled or switched their cell phone plans and numbers due to financial constraints. In addition, the women without cell phones were difficult to locate if they moved from semester to semester, as I often had phone numbers for their prior residences. I relied on email as the most consistent and effective mode of communication with the respondents.

⁸ Please see Appendix A for more detailed information regarding pre-screening contact.

This lack of consistent and accurate contact information meant I was unable to conduct a follow-up interview with one respondent. We scheduled follow-up interviews on more than one occasion, but she would often cancel because of her post-graduation work and job search commitments. Six months after completing all of my other interviews I stopped trying to contact her. Her first interview covered all of my topics in depth, and her friendly responses whenever we spoke let me know that she did not have ill feelings about the interview process.

Sample Demographics⁹

The average age of the women in my study at the time of the interview was 20 ½ years old. Of the respondents, 37 women identified as Christians; one, as agnostic. Another respondent identified as spiritual, and another respondent practiced aspects of Christianity and Islam. She said that she mostly saw herself as a spiritual person. Thirty of the women I interviewed had two parents whose most recent degrees were high school diplomas, trade school certifications, or associate degrees. Ten women had at least one parent who had college degrees. Although I did not use sexual identity as criteria for participation, all of the women in my sample are heterosexual.

The hometowns of the women, as well as their status as college students, situated them to uniquely reflect on the Black daughter-father experience and their fathers' contributions to their future family and career aspirations. Most of the women were from the Midwest, an area that was once dominated by manufacturing jobs, particularly related to the automotive industry. Deindustrialization has led to economic and family transitions among urban African Americans. Many respondents witnessed these transitions within

⁹ Please see Appendix B and C for more detailed demographic information.

their immediate or extended family, neighborhoods and communities. While they were in touch with some of the negative consequences of deindustrialization, such as substance abuse, incarceration and unemployment, they also experienced positive institutions such as church and extended kin which for some offered safe spaces and buffers.

For the purposes of my study, I categorized the women as from working class backgrounds when a parent held a trade or factory position or other traditionally working class job. I also included sales, clerical, and other paraprofessional positions within the working class category. As I interviewed women, I found that many women's parents changed jobs or increased their skill level over time. Many working class families, particular single-mother-headed households, fluctuated between working poor, working class, and low-middle-class occupations. Consequently, many of the women in my study had mothers and fathers who received government assistance of some sort for significant periods of their childhood. However, two women were unsure whether their mothers were employed and working class more often than they received welfare benefits and unemployed. I included those women in the study because their explanations of their mothers' occupations included traditional working class positions and their unemployment never last for years at a time.

Identifying class status is an incongruent and murky task within sociology, particularly in studies of African Americans (Lacy, 2007). Several different standards of class, including income, education, and occupation are often used, and many of them are outdated or in need of revision. In order to align my selection process with previous studies, as well as reflect the knowledge base of the women, I used their parents' level of education and occupation to determine their class standing.

During a pre-screening interview I asked each woman: What was your father's primary occupation when you were growing up? What kind of work did he do? How many years of schooling did he complete? I also asked the same questions about the respondents' mothers, relying on education and occupation to determine class status.

I chose not to use family income to determine class status because many women in my study rarely knew their household income. In addition, many of the women had parents who worked as laborers for unionized manufacturing businesses. As a result, their family incomes sometimes appeared more middle class than working class due to union pay negotiations and factory overtime. I also decided not to depend on the women's class self-identification during pre-screening.

Interestingly, many studies find that people label themselves as middle class; however, as I prescreened respondents, I found that many downplayed their parents' education status and considered themselves working class or lower income. They did this because they were comparing themselves to the affluent backgrounds of their classmates. For instance, a woman whose mother was a pharmacist and father a research scientist with a PhD argued that her family was working class. She believed that her family was working class because she felt that they had fewer resources than other students' families at the university and because her family's quality of life decreased when mother lost her job. Her assertion regarding her peers' class status is probably correct, given that in 2007 approximately 86% of the freshman class came from families who made fifty thousand dollars or more per year. However, her parents' level of education and occupations in managerial and professional careers precluded her from my study.

Among the 40 respondents, 6 women had at least one parent with a bachelor's degree as the highest earned degree. Four other women had at least one parent whose highest degree was a Master's degree. Most often, their parents earned their degrees as nontraditional college students. The most common narrative among my respondents with college educated parents was that their parents held working class jobs most of their lives and transitioned into more professional roles or obtained college degrees once the daughters were in their late teens.

Even after earning four-year college degrees, the parents often worked traditionally working class positions. For instance, one woman had two parents with bachelor's degrees. However, neither parent worked within fields related to their areas of study. Her father was a painter at an automotive factory and her mother was a nurse assistant.

Lacy (2007) recommends that while working class jobs, such as postal work, have traditionally been included in studies of the Black middle class, changes in education, occupation, and income among African Americans in recent decades calls for these working class occupations to be linked with blue collar, or working class status. Lacy argues that these workers should be part of the "blue collar aristocrats" as originally asserted by LeMasters (1975). In keeping with Lacy's (2007) argument, I included women whose parents had college degrees. I placed women who had a parent who was a teacher, minister, or government worker in the lower middle class category. As a result I expanded my study to include women from low-middle-class backgrounds whose parents also had a working class history. As a result, 35 are from working class backgrounds, and 5 are from the low-middle class.

Interview Format and Process

A methodological strength of this project is that I had three points of contact with the respondents. I averaged about 4.5 hours of contact time with each woman I interviewed. Through these three points of contacts I built rapport with respondents and had opportunities to check for inconsistencies in my data and to discover and explore emerging themes.

I used the first point of contact, the pre-screening process, to introduce myself and the project in a formal manner and to build rapport. Once possible participants contacted me, I asked them their age, school enrollment status, racial identification of themselves and their parents, gender, childhood household configuration, and questions about class status and parental education and occupation¹⁰. I used their responses to determine their eligibility to participate in the project.

The final two points of contact were semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews. The second point of contact was a 1½ to 2-hour in-depth interview¹¹; some interviews lasted as long as 3 hours. Before the interview began, the women filled out a short survey¹² that covered demographic information such as age, hometown, number of siblings, and sex of siblings, which parents they share with siblings, academic performance in primary and secondary school, college academic performance, and extra-curricular activities. I used this survey as a point of reference during the interview and to record demographic data.

¹⁰ Please see Appendix D for the prescreening protocol.

¹¹ Please see Appendix F for the interview protocol.

¹² Please see Appendix E for the demographic survey.

The third point of contact was a follow-up interview¹³, held about a month after the first interview, in which I built upon themes that arose in interviewees' first interview or addressed trends I saw across multiple respondents' interviews. In the follow-up interview, I asked different questions about topics similar to those addressed in the first interview so that I could validate their responses. In addition, the follow-up interview served as a space for the women to clarify their thoughts from the first interview.

I scheduled the interviews at a time and place that was convenient for my respondents. I interviewed them in study rooms, dorm rooms, coffee shops, and my office. Most of the women chose to be interviewed in my office or a study room so that their friends and roommates would not interrupt or so that they could be interviewed between classes or work study. With the permission of the respondents, interviews were audiotape recorded and transcribed. I took detailed fieldnotes about the interview environment and other aspects of the interview that were not easily determined via audio recording.

I designed my interview protocol to obtain perspectives on how the women understood influential as well as mundane family life experiences. I was particularly interested in what they thought about the dominant discourse surrounding fatherhood and womanhood. I structured questions so that I could collect data that highlighted the moment in which the women shared differences and similarities between their lived experiences and dominant narratives regarding family life.

I created a semi-structured interview protocol in order to cover specific topics. These topics were the women's: 1) academic experiences 2) feelings about themselves 3)

¹³ Please see Appendix G for the follow-up interview protocol.

family structure 4) relationship with parents 5) friendships/personal relationships 6) ideal notions of womanhood and fatherhood. Their responses to some of the questions are not analyzed in the dissertation, as they are more relevant to future empirical projects. In order to obtain these details, I often asked the women to recount stories. For instance, I asked them to *Tell me a story that is a good example of what your family was like when you were growing up.*

I chose the covered topics based upon my review of the Black family studies literature and a pilot study I conducted in 2005 of 16 women with non-residential fathers. I adapted my pilot study questions to include the experiences of women with residential fathers. I also added questions about gender ideologies and ideal family forms. After I interviewed the first ten women, I listened to their interviews and reviewed their transcripts to determine whether there were themes in their interviews my questions had not been addressing. I subsequently revised my interview protocol and asked the initial ten respondents the new questions during their follow-up interview.

The responses of the first 10 women to the question *Is there any other information that you would like to share or think is important for me to know?* was particularly helpful for this approach. I found that many women discussed their religious preferences, so I added the question, *What role do your religious preferences play in how you think about family?* They often responded that they did not have anything to add. However, a few women mentioned that their Christianity played a role in how they think about family and life.

In the first section of the interview, I asked about their academic performance, with specific questions on how their fathers contribute to school performance. I probed

their responses for information related to their fathers' helping them with schoolwork, attending school events or meetings, and offering encouragement, resources, and advice.

The second section of the interview focused on the ways in which the women thought about themselves. I asked questions about self-esteem, as well as questions such as, "In what ways do you think your father influences your confidence in yourself?" Responses to these questions illuminated how daughters thought their fathers shaped the ways in which they envisioned themselves. This section addressed a primary research question—how fathers contribute to the development of how daughters feel about themselves as women.

The third section explored their childhood day-to-day experiences, providing background information on the types of financial or interpersonal obstacles respondents' experienced. This gave me context for understanding their views of their family and ideal family arrangements. Examples of questions include: "Tell me what your family was like when you were growing up? Some families find it difficult to make ends meet. How would you describe your family's financial situation when you were growing up? Did your family ever receive Food Stamps or welfare when you were growing up?" I also inquired about how close they felt to extended family members and how often they interacted with them. This section emphasized questions related to cohesiveness of the family and financial stability.

In the fourth section, I asked about parental disciplining, fathers' personalities and parenting, and parents' activities, such as jobs, community involvement and substance abuse. Other questions included: "How do you think (not) having a father living in the household influenced you? How do you think your life would have been different with

(out) your father in the household?” I gathered information about respondents’ fathers as individuals and how daughters’ understood their fathers’ performance within the immediate family, the workforce, and the community.

The fifth section explored the implications of the daughter-father relationship for daughters’ expectations of romantic and non-romantic relationships. Questions included: “Do you have a partner? Tell me about the quality of the relationship. Tell me about how you act in your romantic relationships? What is your level of commitment in these relationships? How important is sexuality to you in your relationships? How old were you when you participated in your first sexual activity? What has been good/bad about sexuality in your relationship? How would you describe your level of sexual activity? In what ways do you think your relationship with your father influences your relationships with men? With romantic partners? With any relationship?”

The sixth section focused on respondents’ ideal perceptions of marriage, fatherhood, and womanhood. I asked questions about their ideal family arrangement, their feelings about single motherhood, and their definition of a good father.

In the final section, I asked whether there were any topics I had neglected and why they decided to participate in the project. I asked the latter question to understand what drew them to the study. The respondents also raised topics that they wanted to discuss in more detail.

The interview experiences varied. Many of the women had formal demeanors as they interviewed. I could tell that some type interview experience. After completing their surveys they would sit straight in their seats and project their voices toward the tape recorder. However, by the time I got to the second section of the interview, in which I

question respondents on their feelings about themselves, most women seemed relaxed and conversational.

Like Brown and Gilligan (1992), I chose to let my interviewees lead the interview. As a result, the interviews often deviated from the linear path of my protocol. Whenever there were long pauses I would use those moments to redirect the interview to topics I wanted to address. I also paid close attention to when the women were silent or resistant to certain topics. I used those moments to probe their responses and to check-in about their comfort with the interview. As I constructed my interview protocol, I expected the silences to occur most when I asked questions about sexual decision-making and intimate relationships. However, most of the responses occurred when they attempted to explain feelings of disconnect with their fathers.

Some women from single-mother headed households cried as they expressed appreciation for their mothers' support over the years. Some cried as they described disconnected relationships with their fathers. Many women shared that they found the interviews to be cathartic because it was often their first time thinking about and sharing in-depth thoughts regarding their family, particularly their relationships with their fathers. While several of the interviews elicited strong emotional reactions from the women, I experienced very little interpersonal tension with the respondents.

Although the structure of the interviews and my data collection method were important for obtaining data about the meaning the women made of various life experiences, it is important to note that my identity influenced my interactions with them. For instance, Brittany shared that she would not have revealed as much information about her family life if I was not Black:

I asked if you were black, because I wouldn't tell you everything I told you. See, I feel like I probably wouldn't have told a white person that my brother not my brother, my daddy was into drugs because this is typical stereotype of a black man. I wouldn't have told her. I feel like I have a better relationship with another black girl as opposed to a white woman. I probably wouldn't have told her everything. It would have been very short.

Similarly, throughout my interviews I found that many respondents felt comfortable with me because I was close to their age and shared their racial and gender identity. For instance, after our interviews, Claire called me and requested we keep in touch and have lunch. We never had lunch together because of scheduling conflicts; however, whenever, I saw her, she stopped to talk and initiated hugs. Claire was not unique; many of the women suggested that I meet them for lunch or coffee, asked me for advice about undergraduate studies and graduate school, and seemed genuinely excited to see me whenever we would run into each other on campus. Many women expressed that they saw me as a campus ally, resource, and in some instances as a role model.

Despite the rapport I built with the women, I worked not to avoid making assumptions based on our shared identities. As Nelson (1996) noted there are “gradations of endogeneity” such that I may share the same race and gender as the women, but differ from them in class, age, and other social identities (see Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003 for a more in-depth discussion of the relationship between Black female interviewers and interviewees). One obvious difference was that, as a PhD candidate, I had more formal education than the respondents. Interestingly, I found that the women saw my graduate student status as a similarity, rather than a difference. Many aspired to attend graduate or professional school at some point in their lives. Another common difference between myself and the respondents were our hometowns. Many of the

women were from northern and Midwestern metropolitan areas. I, on the other hand, have spent most of my life in small and midsize southern cities and suburbs and am unused to the challenges of urban spaces.

Our dissimilarities became particularly evident when I interviewed Ruth, who shared some reservations about my educational background and physical appearance. After our first interview, Ruth asked me where I received my undergraduate education and if I was a member of a sorority. I told her I attended Hampton University, a historically Black university, and am a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, a historically Black public service sorority. She said “figures” and that I seemed like a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated and like a typical Hampton University graduate.

Puzzled by Ruth’s reaction, but also pleased that she felt empowered enough within the interview context to express her true opinion. I asked her what she meant. She said women who attend Hampton University typically come from privileged backgrounds, are of light brown complexion, and are pretty. Her assertion was interesting to me, particularly since I am a first generation college student from a working class/low-middle class background and believe I am darker than a light brown complexion.

For each interview, I dressed casually and in a way that would create little difference in appearance between myself and my interview subjects. The day I interviewed Ruth, I wore a white tank top, an imitation gold bracelet, a Sunkist baseball cap, a long jean skirt, and large hoop earrings. Ruth had her hair in braids and wore hoop earrings, a t-shirt, and jeans. Ruth has skin the color of dark chocolate, was a couple inches shorter than myself and weighed a bit more. I found her to be very pretty.

However, it was obvious to me that she noticed and made judgments about our physical differences.

I asked Ruth if her opinion influenced the interview and she said no. I was skeptical because she was tense intermittently throughout the first interview. However, she was much more relaxed during our second interview. After the second interview, she asked about my parents' highest level of education and my class background. When I shared that I was a first generation college student from a working class/low middle class background she smiled and asked more questions about my college experiences. She even emailed several times me after our second interview to ask me questions about graduate school. My interaction with Ruth demonstrated that despite our shared racial and gender identity, there are other social identities which can influence interviewer and interviewee interactions.

Coding and Analysis

My analysis was guided by aspects of grounded theory and voice-centered analyses approaches as a way of assessing the women's experiences and perspectives that may fall outside of dominant cultural narratives (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This required that I review their narratives for the multi-layer contexts by which the women discussed themselves, their experiences, beliefs, worldviews, and dominant discourse (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009).

After the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, I reviewed the tapes and transcripts for accuracy. I listened to and read each interview multiple times as I engaged in the early stages of coding and memo writing. Subsequently, I reviewed the interviews again, and assembled them by types,

such as narratives of close daughter-father relationships, narratives of disconnected daughter-father relationships, narratives that emphasized ideal daughter-father relationships, narratives that de-emphasized the relationship, and I also grouped the interviews by household type (single-mother-headed households and two-parent). I began coding by categorizing the data with “open codes” for 40 interviews of 20 respondents. This analytic approach allowed me to identify broad themes and categories (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The most relevant of these broad categories were: 1) academic experiences; 2) feelings about self; 3) family relationships; 4) fatherhood; 5) friendships/personal relationships; and 6) womanhood. I created the categories to match segments of the interviews.

After identifying general themes from these interviews, I hand-coded the remaining transcripts and subsequently entered them into NVivo, a data management software program. Next, I analyzed the data using thematic coding (Emerson et al., 1995), an iterative approach that involves reading the transcripts for broad themes and subsequently sub-coding portions of the data into more specific themes. I ended up with over 40 specific codes. Some examples of specific codes from the broad category of fatherhood include: 1) Black fatherhood; 2) social fathers; 3) residential fatherhood; 4) provider roles; and 5) caregivers. These coding categories not only helped me to organize and make sense of the data, but also allowed for pointed analysis of different topics, such as experiences with social fatherhood.

To ensure the accuracy of the coding, I reviewed the data by searching for inconsistencies and analyzing the moments in which the women were silent or made contradictory comments. These moments often elucidate key themes within the data.

Attending to the topics about which respondents shared little or nothing provides critical insight into what they feel is important or may not even recognize as essential (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Young, 2004).

Once I organized the data into broad themes and more specific categories, I created memos outlining details from the data, as well as the emerging arguments. In these memos, I linked the data with current sociological literature as well as explored new theories that supported or deviated from the data (Emerson et al., 1995). I transformed these memos into dissertation chapters.

I edited the interview excerpts that are in the dissertation. I removed some of the “likes,” “you know what I’m saying,” and “umms” if the statements seemed to distract from the interviewees’ main point. I kept many of these phrases within the text in order to maintain the integrity of their speech. I also, changed the names of the respondents in order to protect their privacy. In most instances, I created new names for them that matched the ethnic or word origin of their name. In some instances, the names are ones that the women requested that I use when referring to them.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations. First, despite the number of women I had contact with during the pre-screening process the sample size and recruitment methods offer limited generalizability.

Second, the interviews are based upon the report and recollection of the interview participants; thus, there may be some recall error. Nevertheless, reports of various events are not only influenced by the strength of respondents’ memories, but also how they have conceptualized these experiences. Researchers must not limit life narratives of familial

experiences to mere fact, but also understand how people position themselves, as expressed in narratives, in relation to their lived familial experiences (Smart, 2006; Young, 2004). However, issues associated with memory are minimized as much as possible by choosing a population between the ages of 18 and 22. A major objective of this study is to explore and interrogate *how* daughters conceptualize and act in daughter-father relationships. Despite the limitations of the study, the data collection methods and responses of the women I interviewed provide enough information to allow me to address that goal with analytical and methodological precision.

For almost all of the women, the interview represented opportunities for them to voice their opinions on a campus on which many felt their viewpoints were silenced and invisible. Furthermore, many women chose to participate in the interviews to ensure that their opinions and experiences were included in research and to seize an opportunity to share what they believed to be their unique experiences. The women were aware of all of their possibilities and constraints as they entered college. Their presence and interactions at an elite educational institution with students from affluent backgrounds, often called for them to make sense of their family and class backgrounds as they worked toward their future and worked to make sense of it. The narratives I share in this study reveal that the women were actively seeking spaces to express opinions, and make sense of their families and themselves. Their recollections should be read from the vantage point that the women have had complicated relationships with their fathers and have experienced traditional as well as alternative family forms and life experiences.

Chapter 3

BEYOND RESIDENCE:

Paternal Involvement and the Daughter-father Relationship

Jada: My dad. He's just the rock of the family, just in general. He's like stability, always knows he's going to be there. Like, I know what time he gets off work, he's home or he's at the golf course. He's just really reliable, just in general and that's like really important, I think, especially for kids. So I think his stability and him always being there has played a really, really important role in our relationship. Like, I know I can depend on him. I can depend on him like I couldn't depend on any other guy, I feel like. Like I one hundred percent trust my dad is kind of the thing.

Mary: I met him [my father] when I was twelve, by accident. I was playing outside in the front lawn and he showed up to the house and asked me for my mom and I was like she's at work. [He said] can you tell her that Frank stopped by? And I always knew his name was Frank; that wasn't a mystery to me. But I just didn't know what he was like or who he was or anything. And I looked at him and I was like, Are you my dad? And he's like, you're Mary? And I was like, yeah. And that's how I met him.

Differences between Mary's and Jada's experiences extend beyond their fathers' residence to include paternal involvement and accessibility. As illustrated by the chapter's title "beyond residence," the women's experiences with their fathers were influenced by more than where their fathers lived; paternal involvement serves as an

important element of the women's narratives. This descriptive chapter is intended to provide readers with an overview of the women's experiences with their fathers and families that influenced their daughter-father relationships.

I group the fathers of the women into four categories according to their fathers' residence and paternal involvement. The categories are: 1) supportive residential fathers, 2) distant/uninvolved residential fathers, 3) supportive non-residential fathers, and 4) intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers. The groupings are useful for describing commonalities and dissimilarities in the women's experiences with their fathers. I identify trends in these categories among the women in this study and contemplate the implications of the relationships for the women's experiences with their fathers.

Lay discourse and many research models center discussions of Black families and fatherhood on whether households are two-parent or single-parent, thus ignoring the various ways in which fathers are involved in the lives of their children (Billingsley, 1992; Burton & Jayakody, 2001; Hofferth et al., 2007; Wu & Martinson, 1993). Several social science studies suggest that researchers consider aspects of fathering beyond residence in their studies of paternal involvement (Burton & Jayakody, 2001; Carlson, 2006; Hamer, 2001). These studies argue that not all married fathers contribute to the lives of their children and not all non-residential fathers are uninvolved. They contend that complete analyses must interrogate the multiple ways that fathers make contact with and are involved with children in order to completely analyze paternal contributions to family life and child outcomes. I use these approaches to paternal involvement to conceptualize and analyze the daughters' reports of their fathers' involvement. Using the abovementioned categories of paternal involvement I analytically and conceptually

account for family structure (paternal residence) and family process (paternal involvement), in order to more fully examine the women's experiences.

I also describe mother-father, extended kin, and sibling relationships that influence daughter-father relationships. Knowledge of these relationships is important for understanding the broader familial context of daughter-father interactions. Previous studies find that these family relationships influence the quality of the father-child relationships (Hamer, 2001; Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002; Manning, Stewart, & Smock; Roy & Dyson, 2005). Similar to other studies, I find that mother-father, extended kin, and sibling relationships both facilitate and hinder daughter-father relationships.

Categories of Paternal Involvement

Like Jada, some women's relationships with their fathers were core to their families' operation. Other women, like Mary, had relationships with their fathers that were tangential to their families' everyday activities. What is it about paternal involvement, particularly involved fatherhood that is significant for the meaning the women made of certain experiences and worldviews?

In pursuit of an answer, the following categories describe and examine the types of fathering experienced by the women in my study: 1) supportive residential fathers, 2) distant/uninvolved residential fathers, 3) supportive non-residential fathers, and 4) intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers.

I find Hofferth et al's (2007) approach to measuring paternal involvement useful for describing and categorizing paternal involvement. Hofferth et al. (2007) use Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine's (1987) model of paternal involvement which focuses on

paternal engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in addition to measures of warmth and control. They define the terms in the following manner:

Paternal engagement includes direct interaction with children, and accessibility includes time the father is available to children without directly interacting with them. Responsibility encompasses the management of the child's welfare: ensuring the child is fed, clothed, housed, monitored, managed, examined by physicians, and cared for when needed. Warmth includes a father's affection toward his children, and monitoring/control includes paternal behaviors that lead to restricting, controlling, or managing children's behaviors (339).

These measures provide universal terms to discuss paternal involvement as well as guidelines for assigning meaning to the different types of fathers in this study. I use the terms in my descriptions of paternal involvement.

I also found Kaplan's (1997) categories of father types useful for analyzing and explaining my data. In her qualitative investigation of Black teen mothers, Kaplan used her respondents' terminology to create paternal labels. She identified four types of fathers: 1) walk away, 2) blue moon, 3) present but uninvolved, and 4) supportive. Walk away fathers are fathers who do not contact their children. Blue moon fathers are fathers who do not have consistent contact with their daughters and are in and out of their lives. Present but uninvolved fathers are fathers who live in the same household as their daughters, but are not engaged in their lives. Supportive fathers are fathers who are involved in their daughters' lives. Kaplan's categories are helpful for understanding the importance of residence (particularly non-residential) and paternal involvement

(particularly engagement and responsibility) for the quality of daughter-father relationships and the meaning young Black women draw from the relationships.

Kaplan's categories do not completely resonate with the narratives and experiences of women in my study. One reason is that a large proportion of the women in Kaplan's study had walk-away fathers who did not have any contact with their daughters, whereas Tanya is the only woman in my study with a walk-away father. Most of the women in my study from single-mother-headed households had "blue moon" fathers, and most of the women from two parent households had supportive fathers. Perhaps there were so many walk away fathers in Kaplan's study because seventeen of her thirty-two respondents were teenagers when she interviewed them. If I had interviewed some of the women in my study when they were between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, more would have had walk away fathers. Thirteen women in my study with non-residential fathers shared that their fathers re-emerged in their lives after being absent from two to ten years during their high school years. Their experiences as well as those of the women in Kaplan's (1997) study reveal the transient nature of paternal involvement, particularly among non-residential fathers. Kaplan also collapsed supportive residential and non-residential fathers in the category of supportive fathers. I find it necessary to distinguish between the experiences of women with supportive residential and non-residential fathers. As I will detail later in this chapter, the experiences of women with supportive, non-residential fathers were similar to those of women with supportive residential fathers. However, there were differences in their fathers' accessibility and the daughters overall desires for their relationships with their fathers. Combining the experiences of women with supportive residential and supportive non-residential fathers would overshadow

differences between the two categories as well as limit my ability to describe similarities between all women with non-residential fathers. As a result, I created categories that are informed by Kaplan's groupings, but reflective of the residence and paternal involvement experiences of women in my study.

The following are brief descriptions of my categories. Supportive fathers lived in the same households as their daughters. According to the daughters' descriptions, these fathers were engaged, accessible, responsible, and monitored and controlled their children. For the most part, most daughters in this category shared numerous examples of their fathers' warmth. Distant/uninvolved fathers resided in the same households as their daughters, but were either emotionally distant or failed to interact with their daughters in ways they found meaningful for their sense of self. They identified their fathers as responsible, but expressed discontent with their father's warmth and engagement.

Supportive non-residential fathers lived in separate households from their daughters. Daughters of supportive non-residential fathers described their fathers as being warm, engaged, responsible, accessible, and performing acts of monitoring and control when they were with them. However, they felt that their fathers' live-away status limited fathers' opportunities to bond and be engaged. Intermittent/uninvolved fathers lived in separate households from their daughters and had inconsistent contact with them. Daughters reported that their fathers would go months or even years without contacting them. They described their parenting as irresponsible, disengaged, inaccessible, and lacking in monitoring and control. However, some women shared that when their fathers contacted them they expressed warmth.

In the following section I use excerpts of individuals' narratives¹⁴ to highlight key themes of my paternal involvement categories. By describing particular experiences, I interrogate daughters' understandings of the process by which various types of paternal involvement occur.

Supportive Residential Fathers (n=17)

Women with supportive residential fathers emphasized their fathers' engagement, warmth, and responsibility. They discussed their fathers as the connecting fiber of their immediate and, at times, extended families. They described their fathers as fulfilling financially family-supportive roles, acting as sources of strength and moral guidance, and building their children's self esteem. The women felt that their fathers were integral parts of their lives, as evidenced by their positive conversations with their fathers and their fathers' presence for everyday activities.

Women with supportive residential fathers discussed their fathers' efforts to financially support their families. They shared that their fathers faced unemployment issues or worked multiple jobs, but attempted to create financially stable environments in which they served as the families' primary financial support. When I asked Nia to describe her family's financial situation during her childhood she shared, "They had stable jobs." After I asked her to tell me more, she said:

¹⁴ Many of the narratives in this chapter and the study describe time periods in the women's lives. I write specific ages when possible but the women did not always know their ages. They connected their examples to their school grade level. Women with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers offered more specific time points because many of their memories were connected to events, like graduations or birthdays; or they were memorable moments because of the magnitude of the event, such as Mary remembering the first time she met her father.

He worked at one job for a long time and then he moved on to something else and then that one job wasn't working out so he has another one now. He works like two more now, where he works at currently.

She also mentioned that her mother worked two jobs, saying, “My mom had to find a second one to support us too.” Her statement reveals that while she viewed her father’s financial contribution to be significant, her mother was also necessary to their stability. Although women like Nia shared that their families were stable, their stability was often within the context of tremendous work commitments of their fathers and mothers. The daughters described several instances of their fathers facing heavy workloads and even intermittent unemployment or job transitions. Some felt their fathers experienced provider-role strain in their attempts to financially support their families.

When I asked Nia to describe the quality of her relationship with her father, she responded by saying, “It's pretty much close.” Nia’s short response reflected her opinion that she was close to her father: so, much so that during the interview she sometimes had difficulty contemplating characteristics of disengaged fathers. Typical engagement activities with her father included sports and reading. She recounted:

With my dad, I walk up to this nearby baseball park. We would just do something with softball and just go up there and run around a lot. It was pretty fun.

Nia described their baseball playing as an activity that occurred frequently during her childhood, highlighting that her father engaged in consistent forms of interactive activities. In addition to doing activities together, Nia shared that her father talked with her. She felt her father was a good father because he gave her advice and moral guidance. When I asked, “What makes him a good father?” She replied,

Well he encourages me to believe in myself, to gain some knowledge for myself, to respect other people and just have some self respect really.

Her father's encouragement helped her develop self-confidence, particularly in her spiritual development as a Christian. Nia recalled feeling anxious about whether or not she was a "great Christian." After sharing her apprehension with her father, Nia recounted that:

He told me not to worry so much about it because like there's like a lot of things that people have done that are like against the Christian faith or against the Bible so as long as you just keep believing, you know, you could never go wrong.

When I inquired about her response to his advice, Nia replied it,

Makes me feel better about myself yet I still feel confused about how to be a great Christian or if I should worry about being a great Christian at all.

While Nia's worry was not totally resolved, she gained confidence from her father's encouragement. This sort of moral guidance and engagement was common among supportive residential fathers.

Interestingly, when I asked Nia to share her most positive memory of her father, she stated, "The fact that, you know, I could talk with him about anything." Nia's general response was common for many women who had supportive residential fathers. They described everyday caretaking tasks that their fathers did well. The paternal involvement they experienced was so consistent and frequent that they emphasized general trends, rather than specific events. By contrast, women with uninvolved relationships shared specific memories, if there were any.

Though women with supportive residential fathers had different experiences, they consistently expressed that their fathers were warm, responsible, accessible, and engaged.

They felt close to their fathers and emphasized their fathers' emotional and material support. Many women with supportive residential fathers discussed their fathers' positive attributes and the ways their fathers fulfilled dominant expectations such as moral guidance and financial support. As a result, they sometimes described their fathers as super dads who worked tirelessly, gave sage advice, had them engage in activities, were constantly accessible, and never made major mistakes. Upon probing, the women revealed some of their fathers' shortcomings. For instance, Nia said that her father was a good father "except when he's wrong." When I asked her, "What happens when he's wrong?" She responded, "He gets irrational and he overreacts." I followed-up by asking, "Is he wrong often?" She replied, "No. Not too often." Later in the interview Nia she was uncomfortable with how angry her father would become during arguments. However, she always returned to her narrative that her father was hardly angry or wrong, so his angry responses were not major concerns of hers. Nia was uncomfortable sharing what she believed to be her fathers' shortcomings or negative attributes. Like Nia, other women with supportive residential fathers readily shared positive experiences and reluctantly revealed negatives ones. By contrast, women with non-residential fathers did not hesitate to describe their fathers' failings.

I attribute the tendency of women with supportive residential fathers to emphasize positive attributes to a couple of reasons. First, some of the women may still be in ideal love with their fathers, and were unwilling to explore their fathers' shortcomings or average behaviors. Second, many women with supportive fathers may have been aware of negative imagery regarding Black fatherhood and wanted to insure that experiences with positive Black fathers made it into my study. For instance, when I asked Nia why

she decided to participate in the study she said, “Well, I have a good relationship with my dad. I figured it would be great for me.” The women’s emphasis on the positive attributes of their fathers may have been strategic in response to the development of their broader views regarding how Black fathers are understood within society.

My in-depth interviews of women with supportive residential fathers exposed men who performed “super” acts and were, overall, responsible fathers. They were good fathers with modest occupations and wages who embraced most, if not all, elements of paternal involvement. Studies of Black fathers often fail to include experiences with involved, married fathers (Bowman, 1990; Coles & Green, 2010). The women’s recollections of their fathers’ paternal involvement highlight the myriad ways that supportive residential fathers contribute to the lives of their daughters and contribute to a relatively limited literature on the paternal involvement of responsible Black husband-fathers.

Distant/Uninvolved Residential Fathers (n=3)

Women with distant/uninvolved residential fathers said that their fathers were residential, performed some care-taking duties, and provided for their families’ financial needs, but lacked warmth.

The reasons for their fathers’ distance varied. Melanie, whose parents divorced after her freshman year of college, said her father did not talk or interact much with the family during her childhood. She shared that many of his comments to her were about her weight and physical appearance. Erin shared that her father performed many caretaking tasks such as picking her up from school and watching her and her brother while her mother worked. She shared that he protected her from physical abuse from her brother,

but did little to build her self-esteem and confidence. According to Erin, her father would insult her and call her “stupid” and “ugly.”

Devin, her mother, and siblings had tense relationships with her father. According to Devin, her mother who was a schoolteacher and her father who was a truck driver came into conflict over her father’s frequent unemployment. Devin and her siblings avoided her father because he was hyper-critical of their behavior. Devin said that she was uncomfortable when her father was home, and enjoyed her family life more when he travelled.

When I asked Devin how often her father travelled, she responded,

He would come home maybe on weekends – maybe. Like it depends on his job. Sometimes he might be home. He might leave for a month. Since he quit and got so many jobs like it depends for every job.

Devin said that her father was distant and fussed at her and her siblings when he was home and when he called the family from his trips. She shared,

All the times that he yells and hollers at us enough to make us cry all the time, that's just bad.

Devin consistently described instances when she felt her father was too controlling and punitive and lacked warmth. When I asked her to describe the quality of her relationship with her father she said:

I don't have any stories but I will tell you that like normally when I used to talk to him I always used to cry. Somehow he always used to make me cry every time I used to talk on the phone. So I never answered the phone whenever he would call because I was just like, what's the point.

Devin's disengagement from her father was so pronounced that she avoided him during her childhood. When I asked Devin to describe her adult relationship with her father she shared that:

Um, it's good now. I mean, it's a lot better than what it used to be because I used to hate him but now actually I like him. Now actually I like him and he's always on the road, I'm always doing my own thing - so it's still distant but it's in a good state I guess.

Devin felt that in her adulthood she had more control over when she saw and interacted with her father. In addition, she shared that her father expressed a desire to have more engaged interactions with her and her siblings when they became adults.

Unlike women with supportive residential fathers, women with distant/uninvolved fathers freely discussed their fathers' shortcomings and the implications of the relationship for their esteem. For instance, Devin attributed her low self-confidence to her father's criticism. Each woman with distant/uninvolved fathers vacillated between anger, sadness, and love as they discussed their fathers. Nevertheless, they refused to consider their fathers bad fathers, even Devin who said she hated her father during her childhood. Devin, Erin, and Melanie credited their fathers for being providers and said that their fathers did the best that they could. Hence, they were open about their fathers' shortcomings as parents, but refused to declare their fathers bad parents¹⁵.

The women's narratives reveal that residence and paternal involvement are not seamlessly linked. Their fathers were available for daily caretaking, but were emotionally

¹⁵ As a result, I refrain from using labels or descriptive elements which assign value to fathers, which the daughters themselves would not assign.

unavailable. Their lack of warmth and disengagement created tense and distant daughter-father relationships. This category highlights the importance of considering emotional presence and absence in conjunction with residence.

Supportive Non-residential Fathers (n=3)

Supportive non-residential fathers engaged their daughters in-person and through telephone conversations and provided their daughters with emotional and material support on a regular basis. Brittany, Jean, and Lanette are the only women in my study with non-residential fathers who remained active in their lives throughout their childhood and adolescence.

Women with supportive non-residential fathers were at a crux. On one hand they desired more material and emotional involvement from their fathers. On the other hand, their fathers were more engaged than many of their family members and peers' fathers. Their fathers paid child support without continuous pressure from their mothers and the government; the daughters could call their fathers to talk or ask for material support; and their fathers contacted them on a regular basis, often weekly. However, the women felt that the best fathering involved daily contact.

Hence, their reference points for involved fathering were not just dominant expectations, but the fact that they experienced their fathers within community contexts in which active father involvement was intermittent and limited. Therefore, like women with supportive, residential fathers, the women in this category expressed pleasure about their fathers' involvement, in comparison to women with uninvolved fathers, yet displeasure in the sense that they wanted more engagement.

Brittany's father was involved in her life during her early childhood until he went to prison for selling drugs when she was in elementary school. While imprisoned he maintained contact through phone conversations, but Brittany and her brother did not visit her father. Brittany's mother raised her and her younger brother in a house owned by her maternal grandparents. Brittany's maternal grandparents who lived next door and a maternal uncle, who lived across the street, supported Brittany's mother with day-to-day tasks related to childrearing. Brittany explained her experience during her father's incarceration in the following manner, "My dad wasn't there but he was there, but I have my uncles and my granddaddy, they were there." After his release from prison, Brittany's father built a stronger relationship with Brittany and her brother by providing material support, calling, and spending time with them.

Brittany felt that her father was different from most fathers in her neighborhood because she knew him and he made time to get to know her. Most of the families she knew had uninvolved, non-residential fathers. Brittany explained the difference in this manner:

I would say he's different. Because most of them don't even take time out with their children. Even though my daddy don't take a lot of time out, he still talks to us and he still comes around. He still try to do something. So some people don't even have anything to do with their fathers. And I could tell you I know my father. Some people don't know their father. Some people's fathers don't even take the time out with them. So I'll say he's different.

Like supportive residential fathers, supportive non-residential fathers are emotionally available and supportive. Women with supportive non-residential fathers shared instances of support such as advice giving, spending time together, financial support in the form of child support and additional material support. Unlike women with

supportive residential fathers, women with supportive non-residential fathers desired more interaction with their fathers. However, they felt their fathers were different from most non-residential fathers because their fathers spent time with them.

Intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers (n=17)

Intermittent/uninvolved fathers were characterized by inconsistent contact, financial contributions, and emotional support. They called, visited, or made contact of some sort, only to lose contact for a few months to several years. Alexandra explained her daughter-father relationship in the following manner:

He wasn't the type of father that I needed him to be, especially with my mother. He's about five or six years older than my mother. My mother was pretty young, around fifteen, sixteen when they started dating, and he definitely wasn't. He didn't finish high school. He was kind of dabbbling and dabbling, I believe, in selling drugs or something like that.

She felt that her father was irresponsible. When I asked Alexandra how often she heard from her father as a child. She responded:

I remember when I was younger, like around four or five I remember hearing and seeing him more. It's kind of foggy like how many times I remember seeing him more but as I got older, pretty much no contact at all until I was around fifteen then I had limited contact still but after that none.

Alexandra's experiences were typical of women with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers. Some women went over ten years without contact with their fathers; Tanya had no memory of her father. Many shared that their fathers missed important events, like graduations. When I asked Alexandra, "So when you did have contact, was it phone calls, visits, cards?" She said, "It was phone calls and visits." I asked, "Would he send you cards or anything for your birthday or holidays?" to find out if her father

contacted her for special occasions. She said “no.” In order to get a better understanding of the quality of their interactions, I asked Alexandra, “So what would be the content of the calls?” She said:

Just like hi, how are you doing – that type of thing. It was always a little weird because I didn't know how to react because it was like, I don't see you that much but you're still a part of—I'm still half of you –you're still part of me. So how do I react? So it was kind of strained, I would say.

I asked her, “So how do you feel about your relationship with your father?” Alexandra said:

Sometimes it is kind of upsetting that I don't have a relationship with him just because I think it is so important. I feel like I do want to have one with him. Sometimes I do look at it like, Oh man maybe I should make more of an effort but—

Unlike women with supportive fathers, women with intermittent/uninvolved fathers did not think their fathers contributed to their academic and socio-emotional growth. Alexandra explained it this way, “Like since I was fifteen, sixteen so about six, seven years, since I had contact with him. So I wouldn't say that he contributed to my progress at all.”

Women with intermittent/uninvolved fathers expressed the most animosity toward their fathers, and the most confusion about the future status of their relationships with their fathers. Despite the quality of the relationships, many women longed to build closer emotional connections and increase their contact with their fathers. In Chapter Seven I discuss their strategies for making sense of their disconnected relationships.

Women with distant/uninvolved non-residential fathers focused on specific, life-marker events, such as birthdays and graduations. Their memories revolved around

whether or not their fathers attended parties related to these events or if their fathers chose to commemorate important events with visits, phone calls, or gifts. They shared that they wanted their fathers to at least be available for important experiences. Although some women, such as Mary, resisted inviting her father to her graduation because she felt that it was unfair for him to celebrate the culmination of years of hard work when, in her opinion, he had not contributed.

Although the focus of my dissertation is the daughter-father relationship, these relationships do not occur within a vacuum. There are other family relationships that shape or influence the relationship. In the following section, I discuss how mother-father, extended kin, and sibling relationships are important for the meanings the women make of interpersonal relationships with their fathers.

Talking about the Village

Mother-Father Relationship

The quality of interaction between the parents of women in my study varied, most of the relationships being tense or strained. Research studies have found that the quality of mother-father relationships influence father-child interaction (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Deluccie, 1995; Hamer, 2001; Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002; Roy & Dyson, 2005; Roy & Burton, 2007). As a result, I asked the women in my study how they thought their mothers influenced their relationships with their fathers. Women with non-residential fathers said the most about their mother-father relationships, with many stating that their mothers did not speak negatively about their fathers. At first, I found this information to be interesting and promising. I reasoned that if the women's mothers did not speak negatively about the fathers then the women had opportunities to develop their own

opinions. Upon deeper probing, however, I found that many women, particularly with intermittent/uninvolved fathers, shared that no one in their families discussed their fathers. Therefore, they not only experienced their fathers' physical absence, but also his lack of presence in family dialogues and records of family experiences, such as photo albums. As a result, while many women said that their mothers did not speak negatively about their fathers or resist his intermittent efforts to visit, their exclusion of the fathers from family discussions sent clear messages about who existed within the family system and who did not.

From the daughter's reports, I am unable to ascertain the mother's motives for not discussing the fathers. Perhaps they were trying to protect their daughters and thought that discussing someone who was unavailable would be hurtful. Maybe the mothers found it too painful for themselves to talk about the fathers, since some women shared that their fathers emotionally, verbally, and physically abused their mothers or left them in vulnerable situations.

The mothers' silence builds on research related to gate keeping. Studies of gate keeping, which is a term that describes maternal efforts to include or exclude fathers in the child rearing process, focus on the ways mothers work to hinder father-child relationships (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Most of these studies are on white, middle-class families; however, there are a growing number of studies that cover families of color, particularly Black families (Allen & Hawkins 1999; Deluccie, 1995; Hamer, 2001; Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Roy & Dyson, 2005; Roy & Burton, 2007). According to Pleck & Masciadrelli (2001), many of these studies reflect maternal attitudes and do little to illuminate the gate keeping process. Further, Stack and

Burton (1993) find that family members label people who do not perform supportive tasks, or kinwork, as “renegade relatives.” Family members work to find other blood or fictive kin to perform the kinwork “renegade” members abandon. Roy and Burton (2007) found this to be true in their study of mother recruitment of fathers to perform paternal roles (kinscription). Hence, the silence could reflect a labeling of intermittent/uninvolved fathers as “renegade.” By not discussing fathers, the daughters in my study received messages about whether they were safe to discuss their feelings regarding their fathers and about fathers’ roles within their families.

Women from two-parent households often framed their mothers’ discussions of their fathers within the context of what type of man (not) to marry. For instance, Devin said that her mother’s displeasure with her father’s occupations and employment taught her that she should marry someone with a higher level education and more experience than her. Despite the strained relationships, few women shared that they felt their mothers worked to keep them from their fathers.

For the purposes of my study, the physical and dialogical silences regarding their fathers experienced by women with intermittent/non-residential fathers force them to assemble their daughter-father relationships from memories, stories they were told, and their feelings about what they did not know. Few women with non-residential fathers discussed their mothers facilitating relationships with their fathers. It could be that the mothers tried to facilitate relationships, and the daughters were not aware. As a result, they reflected on how their fathers performed in comparison to what they viewed as normative paternal involvement.

Extended Kin

Women in my study from single-mother-headed households and two-parent households included blood family members outside of their nuclear family and non-blood related kin (fictive kin) into their typical family experiences. Their experiences are aligned with previous Black family studies, which find that extended kin networks are vital systems of financial, emotional, and social support, particularly single-mother-headed households (Billingsley, 1992; Jarrett & Burton, 1999; Stack, 1975; Sudarkasa, 2007). Within these systems extended kin perform tasks to fulfill family needs. Family needs are resources and support that are essential to family functioning and survival (Stack & Burton, 1993).

Most contemporary studies of extended kin in African American families focus on material support networks of single-mothers (McDonald & Armstrong, 2001; Roy & Burton, 2007). I find that among the women in my study from single-mother headed households, extended kin increased the number of caring adults in the women's lives and provided needed material and emotional support—so much so that many considered their extended kin to be part of their immediate family. Denise described her extended family connections in the way:

I'd define my family as like my extended family as well. So I have to specify that. Because my like nuclear family would be my mother and grandmother, because we all live together. But like when I think of family, I think of my entire like great aunts and uncles.

For Denise, traditional conceptualizations of nuclear family did not fit her experience. Her grandmother lived in the house with her and her mother and performed many caretaking responsibilities. Denise shared, “my mom worked full time. So before I was in school my grandmother was like my babysitter and playmate all the time.”

Additionally, Denise frequently interacted with her aunts and uncles and saw them as important parts of her family's existence.

Denise's experiences point to important trends within Black single-mother-headed households. Only half of Black single mother-headed households in the United States represent the traditional conceptualization of single-mother households of one adult (the mother) and minor children (Burton & Jayakody, 2001). The other half consist of diverse configurations, including co-residing adults such as grandparents, adult children, and siblings or cohabiting partners (Billingsley, 1992; Burton & Jayakody, 2001), with these household configurations always being in flux. As a result, many children who have non-residential fathers often live within households where there are other adults present. Most of the women in my study experienced fluctuations that included the co-residence of adult siblings, adult kin, and their mother's romantic partners. In addition, all of the women had extra-residential kin (like Denise's aunts and uncles) who were important for their resource support and childcare.

Women from two-parent households also had close ties to extended kin. When I asked Darlene to give me a good example of what her family was like during her childhood, she shared the following example:

Well a good example is like Saturday. Saturday was just like our day. In the morning like my mom would cook breakfast and we'll all like—We won't sit down at the table because we never done that, but we'll all gather in the kitchen and we'll talk and, you know, interact. And then we, when I was a kid, would always go to Detroit because that's where all of our relatives were and we would go visit my Grandma, go drop off some groceries if she needed anything and go visit my grandfather, check on him. Sometimes I would get the opportunity to go see my cousins and we would hang out and play and maybe my dad after that would take us to like a museum or take us just somewhere different—just to see a different scene.

Darlene's narrative is an example of how many women from two-parent households were integrated into larger family networks. Few women discussed their families as "isolated nuclear families." The only women who did not share as many examples of connections with extended kin were Stacy and Melanie, whose fathers' jobs required them to relocate away from family networks. Although they did not have weekly visits or attend religious services with extended kin, like many of the other women from two-parent households, their narratives of family life included holiday and summer visits with extended kin. They expressed appreciation for extended kin as important parts of their family routines and experiences. This is aligned with studies of African American families that find that extended kin are often integrated into immediate families (Sudarkasa, 2007).

Extended kin's social and material support influenced dynamics of the daughter-father relationship. Among women from single-mother-headed households, extended kin offered material and emotional support that complemented, and at times replaced the contribution of the biological fathers.

Although extended kin connections were healthy or helpful, some were burdensome. Some women's immediate families' financial and emotional resources were used to support extended kin. For instance, some women from two-parent households shared that their fathers (and mothers) supported family members who lacked financial resources or positive male involvement. Some women lamented the time and resources their fathers dedicated to kin and community networks. However, more often they were proud that their fathers were role models and father figures within their extended family and community. This finding is interesting because most studies of Black father figures

and children cover the influence of father figures on the children they parent; few consider changes within the fathers' immediate family as a result of his community parenting.

The women's discussions of extended kin reveal that extended kin relationships provided additional, and at times alternative, forms of caring adult support. In addition, their discussions of extended kin positioned their fathers within broader family system contexts. In Chapter Five, I discuss extended male kin contributions in more detail.

Siblings

The women typically discussed their sibling relationships in regards to their fathers in two ways: 1) the influence of siblings' genders on their relationships with their fathers 2) the influence of their fathers' (and mothers') multi-partner fertility. Multi-partner fertility occurs when a person has children with different partners who reside in separate households (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Manning, Stewart, & Smock 2003). The women's discussions revealed family structures and experiences that are aligned with previous studies that find that some fathers favor sons and that Black unmarried fathers have high rates of multi-partner fertility (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Manning, Stewart, & Smock 2003). More importantly, women draw meaning about their relationship from their perceptions of their fathers' interactions with them and other children.

As discussed in Chapter 1, previous studies have found that fathers invest more time in their relationships with their sons (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmar, 1998), although some recent studies find that fathers are increasingly devoting similar amounts of time to their sons and daughters (Raley & Bianchi, 2006). Overall, very few women in

my study shared examples of their fathers favoring their sons. Jada who had a supportive residential father shared that her interest in sports and her status as the oldest sibling were linked to her bonding experiences with her father.

My dad, he was like the whole sports guy so like me and him were really close just because I did the whole sports thing. Him and my other sister were close but not in that same area because they didn't connect on the sports. Because she just started getting into sports like in high school, but like, my dad introduced me to golf when I was like four years old. So I've been golfing since forever. Like we'd go to the range. Like that was our bonding time.

Later in the interview Jada shared that once her parents had her brother during her adolescence, her father focused more on him. “My dad was like waiting for a son. So they do everything together. They're a lot closer than— Like we were really close growing up, but like clearly like he wanted a son so now he has his little boy.” Her fathers’ preference for a son is not that surprising given the findings of father-child studies. Interestingly, Jada did not express resentment about the closeness of the relationship and reflected on it as if it was to be expected or natural; perhaps, this is because she was in late adolescence when her brother was born.

In fact, most women in my study with brothers did not offer examples of their fathers favoring their brothers. Instead, they emphasized that their fathers must teach their brother “how to be men.” Thus, they relied on cultural scripts of fathers modeling proper male behavior to explain what they believed to be the unique nature of father-son relationships and to downplay any distinctions that may have emerged in how they were treated. Even as they discussed the importance of their fathers to their brothers’ gender development, they also discussed that their fathers were equally important to their own gender development. I will discuss these reflections in more detail in Chapter 6.

The parents' multi-partner fertility loomed in the women's narratives. Nineteen women had older and younger siblings from their parents' various relationships. Of those women, fourteen grew up in single-mother headed households. Also, all nineteen of the women had fathers with children by multiple partners. Eight of the women had mothers with multiple partners; two of these women grew up in two-parent households. Their understandings of their fathers' multi-partner fertility are important for empirical considerations of their daughter-father relationships for three reasons. First, their varied sibling relationships factored into how they grappled with their own interpersonal relationships with their fathers. Second, the women's perceptions of their fathers' interactions with their other children influenced how they perceived the quality of their fathers' parenting. Third, the women's discussions of their sibling relationships revealed discontinuities in their broader family definitions and experiences.

Denise's sibling relationship is typical of many women in my study with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers. As far as Denise knew she shared the same father with an older brother and two younger sisters; they all had different mothers. According to Denise, her father was intermittently involved in her and her older brother's life, but he lived with and was married to the mother of one of her younger sisters. Denise shared that for a long time she envied her younger sisters because she thought that her father and her paternal grandmother spent more time with them. While crying she said:

I mean, it still hurts, but like, my father doesn't really care. When I do think about it, it makes me sad. More so because I have a second younger sister. I never met her. I've seen like pictures of like him with the baby. And I'm like, I don't have that. Like he never cared—like never. And it's like at least if I had a picture, it would at least look like he might have cared. But like I know he didn't.

For Denise, the absence of photographs to document her limited time with her father was testament to his lack of engagement in her life. She felt that her father showed all of his other children more attention, although limited, than he ever gave her. Denise also shared that after several years of assuming that her father was living with her younger sister's mother, she discovered that her father had a short-lived relationship with her sister's mother and occasionally visited her younger sister. She said that she was initially relieved that her father did not give her younger sister more attention, but she later became upset because her father chose not to have engaged relationships with any of his children.

Denise's initial envy was common among women in my study with non-residential fathers who lived with their other children. These women wondered why their fathers chose to be responsible with some children but disengaged in their lives. Some wondered if they did something to cause their fathers to be uninvolved. Nevertheless, according to the women's reports, their fathers had inconsistent contact even with the children they saw most frequently. While they sometimes found solace in the similarities in paternal engagement, many were saddened that their fathers would not choose to be more active in the life of at least one of their other children. In these instances, the women described their fathers as not only leaving much to be desired in their personal relationship, but also lacking in their overall fathering.

Women with residential fathers who had children from previous relationships often had different experiences. They worked to make sense of the experiences of their older siblings in light of the type of relationships they had with their fathers. They often

discussed their siblings differing experiences in terms of their father's life course, many feeling that their fathers were more mature and ready to handle life's obligations.

According to Ruth, "men need to go through phases. They need to go from being young men to men and being providers to being husbands to then being fathers." Ruth felt her father was unprepared for his first marriage and child, as exemplified by his divorce and lack of a relationship with her older half-brother. She said that her father improved his parenting skills during his second marriage, his marriage to her mother. She felt that he became more focused on going through the phases of provider, husband, and father. Throughout her interview, Ruth emphasized her father as the leader of the family's spiritual development, the primary source of the family's financial support, and an overall supportive father.

Interestingly, as Ruth's father raised her and her younger siblings, he revealed little about his relationship with her older brother. She described the situation in the following manner:

My father really didn't have that much contact with him until recently or if he did, we didn't know about it growing up. I don't think I knew I had an older brother until I was like seventeen or something like that because my dad kept that side of his life very, very private.

Ruth's experience is not unique among women with married, residential fathers. They often knew very few details about their older siblings and the quality of their father-child relationship. When I asked Ruth, "Do you want to get to know him [her brother]?" She responded:

That would be nice but I don't know. I don't feel like anything would really be there. Because I feel like there would be some kind of resentment that my father raised us and didn't raise him.

Unlike women like Denise who yearned for their fathers' attention, Ruth and other women with residential fathers with children from other relationships often felt that their siblings resented their close relationships with their fathers. As a result I asked how Ruth negotiated her experiences with her father and brother's experiences. The following quote best represents her sentiments:

I think that he really could have stepped up to be the father that he needed to be but at the same time, I don't think he was ready at that time to be a father.

Ruth argued that her father should have been a responsible, involved father for her older brother. She also reiterated her earlier assertion that preparedness is an essential component of fatherhood. Ruth asserted that fathers become better fathers over time. Interestingly, Ruth and other women with supportive residential fathers who had children from other relations with whom they did not have a relationship did not offer extensive criticism of their fathers' inaction regarding those sibling relationships.

Recall that part of Denise's frustration with her father was that he was consistently uninvolved in the life of all of his children. She said that, "You would think that after the first kid you kind of figure it out. I just don't think he ever really like figured out what he was supposed to be doing." Elements of both of these narratives reveal that the women consider their siblings' experiences in the meaning they assign to the quality of their fathers' parenting. The women also emphasize the importance of fathers, over time, learning how to become more engaged fathers. They use their personal and siblings' experiences with their fathers to contemplate their fathers' development as parents.

Despite the women's relationships with their fathers, the existence of so many siblings who grew up in different households begs the question of how the women incorporated their siblings into their conceptualizations of family. For the most part, women with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers knew little about their siblings. When I requested that they list their siblings' gender and age on the interview's demographic survey, many women listed age ranges because they did not know their siblings' ages. In a couple of cases, the women did not know the gender of their siblings. They only knew that their father had other children. Women with residential fathers with children from previous relationships also knew little about their siblings. Many did not list their parent's siblings on their demographic survey. For instance, when Ruth first discussed her older brother during her interview, I asked, "So you have another brother?" She responded, "Yeah, I really don't count him because I really don't talk to him."

Some women with intermittent/uninvolved fathers shared that they wanted to get to know their siblings and extended kin on their fathers' side of the family in order to have a more complete understanding of who they are. Without knowledge of their paternal kin many of the women shared that they felt unsure of who "half" of them were. This was most acute for Abigail because she was her mother's only child. In addition, her mother was in her sixties and having health issues. Abigail shared that many of her mother's siblings were deceased and she felt like she would be alone if her mother died. Abigail felt her paternal kin were important for her to have familial connections in addition to her mother and maternal kin. Although she disliked the way her father was in and out of her life, she continued to interact with him in order to cultivate family relationships beyond her mother-daughter relationship. While other women with

intermittent/uninvolved fathers did not share as acute feelings about getting to know their paternal kin and siblings, they shared that it troubled them to know that they had relatives about whom they knew nothing. This presented a problem for some of them as they contemplated dating because they did not want to accidentally date family members.

The more pressing sociological concern is how the women thought about themselves and family in light of these situations. Many conceptualized their family as their maternal kin and close fictive kin and only discussed paternal kin when I asked about those relationships. Furthermore, these gaps in knowledge were sore points for a few women because they felt that they were unaware of significant parts of their heritage and due to their disconnected relationships doubted they would ever know more.

Discussion

This chapter is important for my overall empirical project because I outline themes and experiences that shaped the women's experiences with their fathers. Throughout this study I return to these themes and categories as references for the meanings the women make of cultural scripts and actual experiences.

I created categories for explaining the types of daughter-father interactions within the context of previous sociological studies. I chose to build on Kaplan's categories of paternal involvement and to use terminology associated with fatherhood studies to explain the women's experiences. The categories reflect the women's narratives and experiences and are explained within the context of sociological approaches to paternal involvement.

These findings reveal that residence is important for opportunities for paternal involvement. They also signify that fathers' daily presence creates so many small

moments of interaction that women with residential fathers did not think of or describe specific events in the same way as women who had limited interaction with their fathers. The women's descriptions of intermittent/uninvolved fathers are aligned with studies of Black fathers which find that non-residential low-income fathers often "part-time" father (Anderson, 1989) or are either involved in various aspects of their children's lives or are completely uninvolved (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Although the number of women in this study with distant/uninvolved residential and intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers are small, their presence of these categories in this study alerts readers to the importance of not collapsing residence and paternal involvement.

Mother-father relationships, extended-kin, and sibling relationships are important for understanding the broader family context of the daughter-father relationships. Most research studies of multiple partner fertility focus on paternal resource allocation and frequency of contact with children. Those topics have important policy implications and provide insight into the contribution of fathers, particularly non-residential fathers. However, few studies investigate the implications of multi-partner fertility for how children think about their father-child relationships, define fatherhood, or conceive of family connections. I find that sibling relationships, particular those due to fathers having multiple partners, required daughters to incorporate interpersonal and sibling experiences with their fathers into their daughter-father narratives. The women navigate the meaning of their relationship among various family relationships and even larger cultural scripts in addition to their interpersonal relationships with their fathers.

In discussing these various relationships daughters contend with complexities of their daughter-father relationships as well as their fathers' interpersonal relationships

within their family system and broader communities. Their descriptions of experiences with their fathers give readers an understanding of the commonalities in experiences within categories and of differences between categories. Readers may refer to these categories as I describe the women's thoughts and experiences in more detail in future chapters.

In the following section I explore the women's narrative work regarding their conceptualizations of mainstream images of fatherhood and Black fatherhood. Their beliefs about fatherhood, particularly Black fatherhood, are important for understanding the meaning they make of their relationships with their fathers and the significance they assign to certain aspects of fathering.

Chapter 4

DECONSTRUCTING DADDY:

An Exploration of Daughters' Reflections on Dominant Notions of Fatherhood

A good father would be a man that, you know, can take care of a family financially and provide for them. Secondly, a man that can be a protector and not just in the physical sense of, you know, having some rifle upstairs, you know, but guarding his family, you know, and being watchful and aware of what his children are doing, where they're going, who are their friends and being active and involved and protective of what goes in and out of the house. And then also being a leader in a moral sense of what's right and wrong and what it means to be a good citizen or a good man or a good woman and everything and having that-you know, teaching that but also leading by example; a model for his family and then for his community.

In a hefty charge, Claire, who had a supportive residential father, described an ideal father as reflective of dominant expectations of fathers to be protectors, providers, and residential. Although Claire was one of the few women in my study who supported dominant father roles in such a strict manner, she was not the only one to discuss dominant role expectations for fathers. When I first noticed elements of dominant fatherhood discourse in my interview data, I wondered how women from two-parent households discussed dominant father roles, and I queried if women from single-mother

headed households supported dominant conceptualizations of fathers as breadwinners and providers. I wondered how, if at all, their experiences of non-residential fathers factored into how they thought about dominant father roles. In this chapter, I focus on how the women incorporated their recollections of their fathers into their general views of fatherhood. I explore how they thought about dominant father roles of: the provider, the residential father, and the nurturing father.

Mainstream societal conceptions of fatherhood are steeped in notions of the nuclear family and the provider role of father. This definition of fatherhood took hold during the twentieth century, focusing on fathers as primary financial providers or breadwinners and as the final authorities on disciplining issues (Hamer 2001; Lamb 2000). Recent studies find that mainstream definitions of fatherhood are beginning to embrace more engaged conceptions that include nurturing, emotional support, and caretaking (Lamb 2000, Marsiglio, Day, and Lamb 2000, Morman and Floyd 2006). However, providing and residence remain core role expectations of fathers, as expressed in dominant discourse, policy expectations, and dominant cultural images of fathers.

Various studies document that despite experiences with alternative family forms and gender equality in family role performances, African Americans, particularly those from the working class and first generation middle class backgrounds support dominant, patriarchal conceptualizations of family roles (Hill, 2005). Further, studies of fragile families that compare Black men and women's marital and parental aspirations and ideology to their behaviors find that African Americans ideologically endorse dominant family roles and marriage (Edin & Kefalas 2006; Waller 2002).

In this chapter I find that the women in my study discussed *ideal* notions of paternal roles within the context of their *actual* experiences with their fathers. As such, their support for these roles reflect their ideas about family needs (which are the resources and tasks necessary for family survival and successful operation, see Stack and Burton (1993) for more description) and what they believe to be paternal responsibilities in satisfying these needs.

In the following sections I examine how the women in my study discuss dominant paternal roles of: 1) the provider, 2) the resident father, and 3) the caregiver. I find that they endorse providing, residential fathering, and care-giving as important aspects of fathering. However, their support of these roles is nuanced by their understandings of how fathers can fulfill these roles. Women with non-residential fathers are more likely than women with residential fathers to discuss alternative ways that fathers can satisfy dominant roles, partly because they were brainstorming the ways in which they would have liked their fathers to be more engaged. However, women with residential fathers described support they had received from their fathers that was akin to dominant expectations.

Taking Care of Business: Daughters' Conceptualizations of Fathers as Providers

Financial Responsibility

The women considered paternal material support in the form of financial and in-kind contributions to be an essential part of fatherhood. However, they differed in their explanations of this responsibility. All the women with residential fathers, except for Melanie, collapsed financial provision with residential fathering and marriage. Their discussions of material support centered on the cultural image of fathers as breadwinners.

By contrast, women with non-residential fathers, with the exception of two women, emphasized child support and in-kind support as important means of stability for their households with their custodial parent. Their discussions focused on family financial needs. They did not link paternal financial contributions with marriage. Instead they spoke about the realities of their living situations as children, and considered paternal financial support within the context of non-residence.

Women from two-parent households discussed their fathers as primary providers of financial support, also known as breadwinners, whereas all but two of the women with non-residential fathers discussed child support or other means of financial support as primary aspects of the provider role.

A Provider of His Homestead: The Breadwinner as the Primary Financial Source

Women from two-parent households supported the notion of fathers being the primary financial providers. When I asked Brenda to define a good father she stated that a good father is “a provider of his homestead.” Like other women in my study who grew up in two-parent households, Brenda emphasized the breadwinner model as an example of how fathers should fulfill the provider role.

Darlene, who had a supportive-residential father, explained it this way, “I see my dad go to work every day. I see him devoted to my mother and taking care of business and that to me is what a good father should be in a family.” Darlene described a father who is a devoted husband, gainfully employed, and through his provision “takes care of business.” She reflected on her personal experience with her father as it supported dominant fatherhood discourse.

Melanie's perspective was slightly different from other women with residential fathers. When her parents divorced her freshman year of college, Melanie's her father ceased to help her with her education costs and removed her from his health insurance plan. As a result, she discussed her father and ideal fatherhood in terms of meeting children's needs, even when they do not live in the household. However, she revealed that her father's primary role during her childhood and adolescence was as the breadwinner.

Interestingly, women from two-parent households were not totally wedded to the notion that good fathers must live within the household. I will explain their views in the analytical section about paternal residence. However, without explicit questions regarding fathers' residence the women relied on dominant narratives and their experiences with their residential fathers to explain and contextualize the provider role, a role which their fathers were able to enact. When I asked some women to describe basic characteristics of fatherhood they focused on basic financial support without connecting it to residence. Recall that Darlene described her father as an example of a good father and ideal fatherhood because he worked and took care of business. When she described the basic elements of fatherhood she stated, "A father is someone who provides support for his children, whether it be emotional, financial—some sort of support, in the basic." When probed to consider the basic contributions, Darlene and others like her contemplated paternal contributions there were not completely aligned with the dominant expectations of the breadwinner. Nonetheless, the women's initial responses relied on their personal experiences with residential fathers who provide. Their responses reflect their personal experiences within nuclear family configurations that are consistent with

dominant expectations of families, as well as their preference for that family configuration.

Like women from two parent households, women from single-mother-headed households relied on their actual experiences with their fathers to explain their conceptualizations of father roles. While women with residential fathers spoke more about breadwinners, most women with non-residential fathers discussed the “least” their fathers could do, especially if fathers were not emotionally involved in the lives of their daughters. They focused on the contributions they thought fathers should make to alleviate family needs. With the exception of Mary and Tanya, they described financial support in the form of child support, in-kind-support, or supplemental household income.

Residential Resources: The Non-residential Father and Sharing the Financial Burden

With a sarcastic laugh, Naomi stated, “If we could get this damn child support like we wouldn't be struggling like that.” She explained that she did not “think the mother should have to just bear the financial burden alone.” When I asked her how she felt about her father not paying child support, she said:

I think it's kind of scandalous because, one I'm just like, you already got the nerve to not be in somebody's life, you know. I could understand people going through hard times and not having the money all the time. And he has a lot of kids. So I'm sure he has a lot of child support that he has to pay. But to me, like that's just like, handle your business. I'm sure you pay your phone bill, you know, but you don't even know what's going on with us. You don't know-we might need that money. So to me that's kind of just crazy. Like if you don't have it, I don't have a problem with you saying, “Look, like I don't have it.” I'm going through hard times right now. But to me when you have a child you definitely have a financial obligation to those kids. Why should like my mom be paying for everything when we're just as much your children as we are hers?

Because her family experienced financial hardships Naomi argued that paying child support should be a first priority. She felt that her father's material support would have alleviated some of her household's financial strains. She understood that fathers may not always have money and wanted her father to offer financial support whenever it was financially feasible. Unlike women with residential fathers, women from single-mother headed households discussed fathers' material support to various households. In addition, they discussed material support as an important part of paternal kinwork, so that mothers do not assume all of the financial responsibility.

The women's main disappointment was not that their fathers did not provide, but that many of their fathers chose not to assume financial responsibility and contribute to family need when they had the resources. They perceived this as their fathers being disinterested in being "responsible" fathers. Of the 20 women I interviewed with non-residential fathers, only Jean, Veronica, and Brittany, had fathers who paid child support on a regular basis. Zoey, who at the time of our interview had not had any type of contact with her father since she was ten years old, explained her opinion in this way:

He didn't pay child support. So I kind of want to get that from him, because I think he owes it to me and my sister to like support us, I guess. He helped create us. I think he has a right to be responsible and you know, take care of his kids. Even if they're not in his life, they're his kids so he should at least contribute to them in some way.

Even Jean and Brittany, whose fathers consistently paid child support, felt their fathers did not contribute sufficient amounts. For instance, Jean shared that her father's regular child support payments and in-kind contributions did not adequately cover household needs and expenses. In fact, she worked during high school to help her mother

(who had weak labor market ties due to complications related to schizophrenia) pay for basic household expenses.

I got child support which was seventy dollars a week, whatever. And he would give me money for like if I wanted to go on a school trip or do these-the extra things that my mom couldn't afford, he would come up with the money, he would give it to me. But he really didn't understand what was going on at our house and I don't think he knew like how much we were struggling at my house until I told him when I was older.

Jean reported that her father contributed financial support that extended beyond child support payments. However, her mother and father's strained relationship prohibited him from having a complete understanding the financial needs of the household. As I will describe in Chapter Five, Jean's grandfather assumed some of the kinwork (and paternal responsibility) which Jean would have preferred for her father to know about and perform.

Mary and Tanya are the only women with non-residential fathers who, like women with residential fathers, emphasized the dominant breadwinner model of fatherhood. Mary is different than other women in my study with non-residential fathers because her and her mother lived in the same household as her maternal grandparents. Mary's grandfather, whom she considered her father figure, occupied traditional roles within the extended family. According to Mary, he was a major source of financial and material support for his children and grandchildren, including Mary's mother and Mary. Unlike other women with non-residential fathers, Mary's mother had residential material support from her parents. In addition, Mary's mother earned more pay and education as Mary aged. As a result, Mary did not express as much family need as other women with non-residential fathers. Her decreased experience with financial hardship allowed her the

space to contemplate ideal paternal involvement that mirrored the financial support she perceived her grandfather provided for his children and grandchildren.

Tanya, who was raised by her mother, with whom she had a strained relationship, lived within a household burdened by financial hardship. Tanya reported that her mother was in and out of the workforce because of her battle with substance abuse. Tanya's grandmother, who also had limited financial resources, was the family's most consistent source of material support. Tanya thought her mother was irresponsible and made poor intimate partner decisions. Tanya placed sole responsibility for her family's financial situation on her mother.

When I asked Tanya to describe her "definition of a good father," she stated, "The opposite of a deadbeat." After punctuating that comment with laughter she continued:

I think the definition of a good father is someone who can provide for the household, someone who's a man. Like there's just so many people who aren't men, like I feel like and, you know, who are supposed to, you know, be the head of the household.

When I asked Tanya about the source of her opinion, she explained that her definition is "more so religious." Tanya's pastor, who she saw as a father figure, was her only source of male support. Tanya shared that he was traditional father (breadwinner) for his immediate family. Tanya relied on her perceptions of his behavior and religion, which she believed to be the source of his behavior, to identify breadwinning as an ideal paternal role.

Interestingly, when women from single-mother-headed households discussed their future marital expectations, they all wanted to be married and have highly educated and financially stable husbands. While financial stability in a spouse loomed large in their

future life expectations, expectations of breadwinners or residential, married fathers did not figure into their conversations regarding general fatherhood. Although they preferred more mainstream provider roles, they discussed less traditional approaches as they pertained to their fathers in order to reflect the various ways their fathers could contribute to financial family needs.

Since the women's household formation is related to how they how they discussed the provider role, I find it important to explore how the women in my study made sense of residential fatherhood. In the following section I analyze their narratives and meaning making regarding residential fatherhood.

The Resident Father: The Best Situation?

Given that so many women in my study with residential fathers linked fatherhood and provision with married, residential fathers, I became curious about whether they felt that residence was the ideal or only ideal situation in which children should be raised. I asked whether their exposure to household arrangements in line with dominant discourse regarding residential, married fatherhood limited their ability to imagine the possibility of responsible, involved fathering occurring among non-residential fathers. Conversely, I wondered what meaning women with non-residential fathers assigned to paternal residence.

Claire, a woman who grew-up in a two parent household and self-identified as highly religious described residential fatherhood as “the best situation.” Like Claire, all of the women in my study identified residential fathering as the ideal scenario. Yet, only four women were adamant that good fathers must reside in the same household as their children—they all grew up with residential fathers. Most women with residential fathers

stated that they believed non-residential fathers could be good parents, but focused their discussions on the shortcomings of non-residential fathering. In many instances, they shared their everyday experiences with their fathers as examples of bonding experiences that are important but rare when fathers live in different households from their children. They thought it was possible for non-residential fathers to be supportive, even though they have never experienced non-residential fathering, yet found it to be less than ideal. Further, none of them shared any examples of active, involved non-residential fathers that they witnessed in their families or communities. Their discussions of the possibilities of supportive non-residential fathering were hypothetical musings separate from anything they had personally witnessed.

Women with non-residential fathers also thought that having residential fathers is the best situation. In addition, they imagined and described various ways that non-residential fathers can develop relationships with their children. Given that only three women in my study had supportive non-residential fathers, the women's examples reflected what they wished their fathers would do, rather than examples of actual experiences.

A Man in the Household

Women with residential fathers felt that resident fathers are available for control and monitoring and bonding in ways that non-residential fathers cannot be available. Kamilah, who had a very close relationship with her residential father, felt that "a lot of things that go on every day you miss if you're not there." Kamilah contended that good fathers need to experience everyday interactions with their children in order to get to know them.

While Kamilah spoke in general terms that could be applied to mothers or fathers, Ruth specifically addressed why she felt it was necessary for children to have fathers in the household:

I feel like it's very, very important for a man to be in the household when raising a man. A woman cannot raise a man the way that he really needs to be raised. Like there is a certain level of nurturing that my mom can like kind of kick my brother's butt, but had my brother had a stronger personality, he would run all over my mother and I think that's where my father being the man in the household, he needs that. And I think every daughter needs a man in the household as well to really develop the way that they should. So regardless of how the relationship was, I think it was necessary that they stay together.

Ruth felt that fathers contribute a level of authority and presence that mothers cannot replicate. She felt so strongly about this that she did not support divorce. In fact, Ruth shared that her parents contemplated divorce during her adolescence. She was glad they did not divorce because she felt that, under most conditions, parents should be married.

Asia stated that residential fathering “helps. I feel like it really does help. Um, yeah I feel like it helps to see that person every day.” She went on to say that when children live in separate households from their parents the children “don't necessarily know who they [their parents] are. You know who they are on the weekend.” Like Asia, Darlene preferred residential fathering because it provides more opportunities for children and parents to know each other. She also shared that her close relationship with her father limited her ability to consider alternatives to residential fathering. She explained that she did not “know anything other than that [a father living in the household].” However, when she considered the family arrangements of her cousins she

expressed that she saw her “cousins who don't have that and there is some difference. I don't know—I guess just having him there every day just helped me.”

Darlene's and Asia's insights reveal how women who live in households that matched dominant ideals regarding household structure used their actual experiences to support dominant discourse related to residential fathering. However, many women with residential fathers argued that while they needed their fathers, that may not be the case for everyone.

Leida: Some people don't need a father. Like especially if you're father's like a deadbeat, like if he's not worth anything, like what's the point? So I think that it depends on who the father—potential father—would be. That's the main thing. Like I think I needed my dad in my household and I think that like some people—the way they turned out like—they needed their father in their household too.

Leida pointed out that “deadbeat” fathers are not worth having in the household. She argued that there is a difference between involved fathering and disengaged “deadbeat” fathering.

Devin, who had a distant residential father, provided a different perspective:

Well I don't know if it would have been better because we would be more used to him and things he wouldn't have been able to find a problem more often. Or if he would have been every time he's home a problem after everyday, everyday, everyday and then they would have divorced. Because maybe they're happier farther apart when he's always on the road and stuff so I'm not really sure how that would have affected it. It could have been good or it could have been worse.

Devin argued that her parents may not have stayed together if her father was around more often because of his tense and distant relationship with the family. Devin's experience illuminates the complicated nature of residence I discussed in Chapter 3. Her experience with a distant and at times uninvolved residential father allowed her to speak to the distinction between physical residence and engagement. In many ways, women with

residential fathers were concerned that non-residential fathers had limited opportunities to interact with their children. They assumed that fathers who live in the same household engage their children. Perhaps they did this because most of their fathers were engaged and lived in the same household.

Raising from a distance

While they also supported the idea of residential fatherhood, I find that women with non-residential fathers were more likely to contemplate extra-residential involvement. In response to a question about whether a good father must live in the same household as his children Shelli shared:

It would be nice and convenient and possibly beneficial to their development but he can be a great father outside of the household and still take care of his responsibilities and pick his kids up or whatever. It wouldn't be ideal though.

Shelli points out that having a father outside of the household is not the most ideal situation, but unlike women with residential fathers, she offered an example of how non-residential fathers can be “great fathers.” Similarly, Tamara argued that she did not “think it's fair for anybody to be raised just with one parent. It takes two to do that so it should take two to raise that.” She went to say that while it takes two, both parents do not have to live in the same household.

Many women from single-mother-headed households emphasized fathers being “present” in the lives of their children. Like Shelli, they asserted that a non-residential father should “take care of his responsibilities.” This became evident as I asked respondents if a good father has to live in the same household as his child. Most women said no. For instance Mary said, “No, not necessarily. But he has to be there.”

Lanette explained being “there” this way:

Because he can do everything, you know. He can raise the child, you know, from a distance. Like if he calls the child or, you know, he's there for advice or you know, he's able to discipline, he doesn't necessarily need to be there. You don't really need to see a face in order to, you know, feel a person's soul.

For the women, “being there” was the primary family need, and that while not preferable, fathers can “raise the child from a distance.” They argued that fathers could “be there” by calling, offering advice and disciplining. This is similar to the behaviors women with residential fathers said would be rare to experience across households. While they highlighted the same concerns, women with non-residential fathers discussed how the activities could and should occur extra-residentially to fulfill family needs. Many of their examples were hypothetical situations which they had not experienced or witnessed, or were based on short periods of time when their fathers were involved. They focused on fathers being “present” despite living location as a way for fathers to contribute to kinwork, family needs, and children’s psycho-emotional needs.

Many women with non-residential fathers expressed that circumstances may preclude a father from living in the same household as his children. Some asserted that it may be best for fathers to live outside of the household because of the nature of the relationship between fathers and the mothers of their children. Many cited hostile parent dynamics as sufficient cause for separate residence. In describing her parent’s relationship Shelli revealed:

If they would have had like a loving relationship and then broken up, uh then maybe I can say our lives would have been better. But I think it could have been worse. Maybe if he would have stayed, he would have continued to like disrespect my mom by having other women or abusing her or whatever and it could have been way worse, like, I

don't know. Maybe I wouldn't even be where I am today. So if it would have been the other way around and he would have been like a loving person, they would have had a healthy relationship, I think that our family would have been way better off, especially like for my brother.

Shelli asserted that resident fatherhood should not come at the expense of family members' health or safety.

All of the women draw on their personal experiences with their fathers. Women with non-residential fathers described possibilities for supportive non-residential fathering, but few had involved fathers. Conversely, women reasoned that fathers do not have to live in the same household as their children, but many could not imagine what their lives would have been like without their fathers and were unable to articulate what non-residential fatherhood entails beyond saying "being there."

Nevertheless, all the women in my study opined that positive engagement with children is a key part of fathering. The idea that a father could parent from a distance was predicated on the notion that he remain involved. In the following section, I examine how the women in my study conceptualized nurturing and care-giving.

The Person Who Takes Care of You: Fathers as Caregivers

The women in my study viewed care-giving as a necessary aspect of fathering, an essential part of "being there." Care-giving operated as a key addition to financial support and residence.

Beyond Basic: Key Characteristics of Nurturing Fatherhood

The women valued fathers who were role models, gave advice and support, and made time to be available.

Darlene: A good father is someone who invests time into their children. I think that separates a basic father from a good father.

Leida: Someone who's there and someone you can talk to. Like even though I don't talk to my dad that much, like I know that if I needed to talk to him, like something like that, I could just call him up, you know.

Kamilah: Oh just to be there to support his children mentally and physically, and to be a disciplinarian in some ways when you see they're going off the wrong path. Be there for love and support. Just basically being there supporting the children.

Lanette: Right. A good father would be, you know, a guy who takes care of his responsibilities as far as, you know, taking his kid to school or you know, giving them advice or just being there when, you know, they need somebody, to help them grow up through life.

These women's definitions of care-giving are consistent with definitions from other research studies (Hamer 2001; Lamb 2000, Marsiglio, Day, and Lamb 2000, Morman and Floyd 2006). Spending time, emotional support (particularly in the form of advice giving) and knowledge of children's lives emerged in the women's narratives as essential elements of care-giving.

For many women, financial support and residence were not meaningful aspects without emotional support, and care-giving.

Pam: A real father is somebody that actually takes care of his children and has an active role in their life more than like just financial, but like emotional and teaching them things they should know just about living in the world.

Mary went as far as to say, "I think emotional support is even more important than the financial aspect." Without prompting, Pam, Mary, and other women with non-residential fathers, compared care-giving to financial support. This comparison reveals that they were aware of financial support as a

significant measure of paternal involvement and one with which some fathers have difficulty. They used financial support as a marker to express how essential nurturing was to them. They emphasized that good parenting can occur even when financial needs remain unmet.

Women with non-residential fathers and two women with distant residential fathers constantly made distinctions between nurturing and unavailable biological fathers. Their desire for more emotional support from their fathers infused their descriptions of caretaking and nurturing fatherhood. When I asked Jean to define what a father means to her she replied, “A father is just a person who donates some sperm to your situation. That's just a father.” After getting over my surprise from her blunt response, I realized that Jean referred to her biological father and grandfathers as “daddies.” So I asked her “how would you define a dad.” She responded that “a daddy is just the person who takes care of you.” Similarly when I asked Alexandra to define what a father was to her she stated:

Father? Well I define father as a man who steps in and helps and takes an active role in raising a child. In most instances I don't even call my biological father my father--I call him a sperm donor because to me that's all he did. My mother could have went to a sperm bank and had the same effect. So I think a father definitely is someone who plays a active role, not just a biologically, like the sperm part but actually having a active role in raising a child.

Jean and Alexandra made distinctions between an engaged and a disengaged fatherhood. Although they switched the meanings of “father” and “dad,” their underlying sentiment was the same—that there is a difference between a caregiver/involved father

and a man who is an uninvolved, biological father. Furstenberg (1993) found that low-income mothers made similar distinctions in their descriptions of fathers.

This dichotomy in defining fatherhood emerged within the narratives of most women with nonresidential fathers as well as Erin and Melanie. Both Erin and Melanie had distant residential fathers. Like Jean and Alexandra, Melanie referred to the “sperm donor.” She shared that, “a dad is the sperm donor, okay, but he supports you, he's around, he takes care of you, he's there for you. And the father could be just somebody whose just you know sperm donor.” When I asked her to describe her father she stated that:

I guess my father was more of a dad because he was there [when she was growing up]. His financial resources were there, but even as far as having a relationship with him like it still wasn't there. I think there's a big difference between father and dad.

Melanie highlighted distinctions between a father and a dad using her own experiences, particularly her relationship with her father before and after her parents divorced. At the same time she acknowledged that even when her father lived within the same household and shared his financial resources he still was not that engaged. Erin compared her biological father to her “holy father” (God) to highlight the difference between a caregiver and a father who is disengaged.

Erin: Well I love my daddy but it's so many things my parents just were unable to give me. Jesus my Father in Heaven is my real daddy. I think of my father in heaven as what a father is supposed to be, a provider, somebody who gives me my value, truly gives me my identity, truly gives me my purpose. And without that I would be lost in the world. How can I get along without that kind of stuff? That's why I did all the crazy things I was doing, you know, because I was lost. I didn't have anybody to tell me who I was. I didn't know. Nobody told me, you know.

For Erin, a “real daddy” (in her case her “father in heaven”) provided emotional support and guidance. All of the aforementioned narratives illuminate the importance the women in my study place on fathers offering emotional support, guidance, and spending time.

Discussion

My analytical aim in this chapter was to assess what the women in my study think about general fatherhood. Most studies of young Black women’s thoughts about fatherhood reflect the opinions of young mothers and their experiences with their children’s fathers’ (Coley, 1998; Hamer, 2001; Morman & Floyd, 2006; Peart et al, 2006). This study is one of few which examine how notions of dominant fatherhood permeate Black women’s narratives of general fatherhood.

Their narratives offer insight into how and why African Americans may support dominant roles that may or may not be reflective of their personal or community experiences. A simple explanation would be that the women support dominant notions, which is not far-fetched given Hill’s (2005) finding that working class and first generation middle class African Americans support some dominant gender role expectations. However, what does the women’s support for these notions mean? Is it simply that they place value on normative paternal roles? I argue that the women relied on their experiences with their fathers to describe their thoughts regarding dominant father roles. Women with residential fathers understood that alternative forms of paternal involvement could occur. However, their personal experiences with supportive residential fathers and knowledge of disconnected father-child relationships supported their ideas that normative paternal involvement is the “best situation.” For them their experiences

“worked.” Women with non-residential fathers discussed their conceptualizations of dominant paternal roles within the context of family need. Nevertheless, their discussions of nurturing and supportive non-residential father involvement centered on what they believed could happen as opposed to actual experiences.

Collectively the women described a preference for fathers who provide (residential) material support and who are caregivers and nurturers. Their definition is similar to that of the authoritative father. Authoritative parenting, characterized by behaviors such as listening, advice giving, aiding children with schoolwork, enforcing and explaining rules, and acts of warmth (praise and listening) and control (saying no and issuing punishment), is defined as parents taking a role as rule maker and enforcer, as well as acting as a supporter (Amato and Gilbreth 1999, Coley 1998). While less than half of the women in my study experienced authoritative fathering, most of the women’s narratives supported the notion of the authoritative father. Their narratives reflect an interest in authoritative fathers who contribute to family needs. Further, the reflections of women with non-residential fathers point to the necessity of contemplating the characteristics of non-residential authoritative fathering.

Additionally, their emphasis on nurturing represents a few new avenues for thinking about fatherhood, generally, and Black fatherhood, specifically. Black feminist scholars have called for more expanded notions of fatherhood that include imagining Black men as nurturers and caregivers. Additionally, research on low-income Black fathers reveals that they often emphasize aspects of fathering that is within their means, such as role-modeling and care-taking (Hamer, 2001). As such, the women’s narratives reveal that they support this type of paternal involvement and consider it critical to their

relationships with their fathers. Nurturing emerges in future chapters as means by which the women identify father figures and understand their fathers' transmission of gendered values.

Implications for Black Fatherhood

Dominant expectations of paternal roles include resident fatherhood, providing, and offering a moderate amount of emotional nurturance. While mainstream fatherhood is defined by adherence to these categories, controlling images of Black fatherhood are characterized by being the opposite of those categories, which includes being non-residential, financially unsupportive, and absent financially, emotionally, and residentially. Studies identify unemployment and incarceration as major impediments to Black men's ability to father in line with dominant father expectations (Bowman 1993; Hamer 2001; Johnson 2000; Young 2004). However, the narratives of the women in this study point out that while the women support dominant notions, they amend their expectations to reflect their experiences. In addition, over the course of African Americans presence in the United States African American fathers have with varying degrees been able to meet dominant standards for fatherhood. This begs an answer to the following question: How do the women in the study conceptualize Black fatherhood?

By exploring how the women made sense of the generic category of fatherhood I am able to present their particular views regarding Black fatherhood, in the next chapter, with more precision. Their preference for, but not total reliance on residence as an aspect of fathering becomes important as we contemplate how the women make sense of Black fatherhood, which is characterized by intermittent/uninvolved non-residential status. Further, their opinions regarding financial support is important for my discussion of the

women's opinions regarding economic challenges faced by Black men, particularly unemployment and constrained labor market opportunities.

Chapter 5

(IN)VISIBLE DADDIES:

Daughter's Conceptualizations of the Limitations and Triumphs of Black Fatherhood

Jean: Most of my friends' fathers the same. Like I thought it was just me. But then my roommate, her daddy ain't shit. My daddy ain't shit.

MJ: So do you think most daddies ain't-

Jean: Well black daddies just don't be shit. They just struggling.

MJ: Why do say that?

Jean: They don't know how to be daddies; they just know how to be fathers kind of.

MJ: Why don't black fathers know how to be daddies?

Jean: I got a couple theories. You got the demasculation theory of course, like the black man feel like he's been demasculated by the white man. And you got the he ain't got no money to provide theory. My daddy in particular; his daddy didn't really do a whole hell of a lot outside of being-bringing home the money so that's what he knew what to do.

Jean's statements conjure up images of irresponsible and constrained Black fatherhood. However, deeper analysis of her life history with her non-residential father revealed that Jean had a much more complex understanding of Black fatherhood. Over the course of our interviews, Jean shared that her father spent time with her at least once per week during her childhood and adolescence, regularly paid child support, and

earnestly worked to be involved in her life. In fact, when she was in high school, Jean's father asked her what he could do to be closer to her and requested that she call him more often. Jean acknowledged that her father participated in her life more than her peers' fathers. Nevertheless, Jean felt that her father's non-residential status and her mother's disdain for her father hindered her and her father's ability to build a relationship that met her day-to-day needs. Jean struggled to reconcile her disappointment in the level of closeness she felt to her father with the fact that her father fulfilled basic societal expectations of non-residential fathers. Jean also weaved experiences with her maternal grandfather into her discussions of her family life and Black fatherhood. At times, she used examples of her grandfather's involvement to point out shortcomings of her relationship with her biological father. Jean's personal narrative illuminates a complex conceptualization of Black fatherhood from which she spoke broadly about Black fathers.

Jean's narrative is not unique among the women in my study. These women assembled descriptions of Black fatherhood from dominant images of Black fathers as well as their personal experiences with biological fathers and father figures. Their accounts of the challenges of Black fatherhood uncovered common and less often explored aspects of Black fatherhood. As a result, I use the term "(in)visible" in this chapter's title to encompass the invisible as well as visible elements of Black fatherhood which permeated the narratives of the women in my study. The absentee Black father is the most visible representation of Black fatherhood within popular discourse. However, stories of engaged fathers in addition to absentee fathers permeated the women's discussions of Black fatherhood.

In this chapter, I investigate how the women in my study perceived barriers to parenting that Black fathers face, and the micro-level, interpersonal responsibilities the women felt Black fathers must fulfill. In the first section of this chapter I focus on the women's general views of Black fatherhood. As a result, I explore excerpts of their narratives in which they share their general feelings regarding Black fatherhood. I only employ specific examples from their relationships with their fathers when the women offered their fathers as examples to prove their points. I find that the overwhelming majority of women in my study argued that race-based structural obstacles are embedded challenges for Black fathers. However, nine women asserted that personal responsibility should override social barriers to fathering. These women reasoned that fatherhood entails the decision to be responsible. In their interviews, some women shared examples of Black paternal involvement which countered dominant notions of Black fatherhood. The most prevalent and consistent example was the involvement of social fathers, men who were (not) biologically related to them, who offered various amounts of emotional and financial support. Twenty-five women in my study shared that they had social fathers. Furthermore, almost all of the women in my study discussed what they believed other fathers contribute to family life, especially when biological fathers are uninvolved. Although largely invisible to mainstream conceptualizations of Black fatherhood and research on Black fathers, social fathers loomed large in the life stories of the women in my study.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of dominant images of Black fatherhood and follow with an analysis of how the women in my study contended with these pervasive images. Subsequently, I explore social fathers as an alternative image of Black

fatherhood that emerged in the narratives of the women in my study. Their discussions of social fathers disrupt the stereotype that Black men are disengaged from family networks. Further, they illuminate how family networks enlist blood and fictive male-kin to fulfill family roles (kinscription).

Dominant Images and Discourse about Black Fathers

Public discourse and research are fraught with images of disengaged Black fathers. The image of the morally, physically, emotionally absent African American father is embedded in public discourse and the American imagination (Cochran, 1997; McAdoo, 2007). For instance, less than a month after the inauguration of President Barack Obama, who is outspoken about being an engaged husband and father, MSNBC aired the special “A Father’s Promise” which chronicled the absence of African American fathers from their immediate families (MSNBC, 2009).

Political and economic structures in the United States, such as slavery and limited job opportunities during de-industrialization, created unique challenges for African American families to survive and thrive. Research links de-industrialization to limited job opportunities for urban African American men (Wilson, 1996). Over the past few decades, many Black men in urban areas have experienced high unemployment and incarceration rates. Some Black men have responded to decreased urban employment opportunities by separating from their families or experiencing role strain due to their inability to meet the demands of them as providers (Bowman, 1990; Collins, 2004). Although unemployment is linked with the disconnection of many Black men from their children and families, research also notes that this is not the only experience of African American fathers (Bowman, 1990 & 1998; Coles & Green, 2010; Hamer, 2001).

The women in my study are not divorced from these narratives of Black fatherhood. They draw upon controlling images, defined by Collins (2004) as stereotypical gendered representations of African Americans within Western popular culture and research, but also articulate their own understandings. My work builds on Collins' (2004) earlier work regarding controlling images of Black men by examining how the women in my study develop narratives regarding Black fatherhood. The women's narratives are in response to controlling images which frame Black men as incapable of fulfilling traditional father roles of the breadwinning married, residential father.

Most of the women in my study actively contested dominant tropes of Black fatherhood by acknowledging their complexities.

Julia: I think black guys get a bad rep a lot of times, you know. They don't really get like the respect that they deserve because there are a lot of people who have their fathers around and there's a lot of good guys.

Ruth: Stereotypical of what black fathers are today, I think my father is very different. And I don't know statistics but I think overall I guess the stereotype of what fathers are, of not being there, not being providers, not being in the household, not being spiritually nurturing to their children.

Shelli: Society thinks that the black man or the black father are these things they're irresponsible, they don't pay child support, they have fifty kids, of course that's going to negatively impact black fathers. So I definitely think that they have struggles that other demographics won't have.

These three women emphasized that there is a predominant societal perception that frames Black fathers as irresponsible. Julia and Ruth complicate this by stating that there are Black fathers who are "good guys" who are "very different" from the stereotypes.

Recall Jean's theories that Black fathers are less involved in family life because of emasculation and provider role strain. I find that almost all of the women in my study couch their views of Black fatherhood within a larger conversation about Black male experiences in the United States and common tropes of Black fatherhood. Thirty-six women in my study, including Julia, Ruth, and Shelli, identified race-based images of Black fatherhood as a major issue facing Black fathers. Twenty-nine of those women believed that these images limit the parenting possibilities for Black fathers. Most of the women who felt that Black fathers faced unique obstacles to fathering emphasized racism as influencing Black fathers' abilities to enact dominant father roles, such as providing. They placed Black fathers' obstacles into the following categories: 1) the breakdown of the Black family, particularly Black heterosexual love relationships and the advent of boys growing up without fathers; 2) economic marginalization; and 3) social stigma as explanation for how racism influences the everyday lives of Black men. I turn soon to an analysis these three categories.

The next section details how the women in my study linked the vestiges of slavery with contemporary trends in Black family relationships. They argued that slavery put into place practices and norms which pitted Black men and Black women against one another and separated Black men from their families. In the subsequent section, "Economic Marginalization," I argue that the women in my study identified economic marginalization as key to limiting Black males' parenting. They believed that Black men are limited by society in their ability to fulfill the provider role. I follow with an exploration of the women's understandings of racial stigma and stereotypes. The women argued that dominant discourse frames Black fathers as irresponsible and unavailable,

and that these narratives become repressive forces with which Black fathers must contend. Finally, I examine responsibility as the key frame by which eleven women in my study made sense of Black paternal involvement. These women maintained that Black fathers should not allow obstacles to limit their paternal involvement.

The Breakdown of the Black Family

Several women identified racism as a major influence upon Black family structures and intimate relationships. They argued that slavery created unhealthy family interactions among African Americans.

Ruth, who grew up in a highly religious, two-parent family, with traditional gender roles, summed up the sentiment of women in my study regarding the link of slavery to the breakdown of Black family relationships:

Historically, being separated, you know, from even hitting the seas [a reference to the Middle Passage], you know, men were on one side; women and children were on another. We were separated at that time. So that automatically broke down the sanctity of what a family should be—a cohesive family should be. And we wonder why, years later, men can't be with their family or they don't feel the responsiveness. Just because of years and years and years of not being where they should have been, and that's within this family sphere. And I think that because of that disconnect, and continuing that disconnect over years, men really don't know their placement unless they've been taught that. And I think in order for a family or for men and for young women to really understand the meaning of family and what a father should be within the household, you have to have that first.

Ruth posited that as a result of slavery, Black men have precarious love relationships with women, which results in many fathers living outside of the household and having little contact with their children. Women who made similar arguments also suggested that men who grow up without their fathers are unlikely to know how to parent.

Women built on this narrative by emphasizing the breakdown of intergenerational transfer between fathers and sons and the implications of that for men's ability to parent. Seven women (3 from two-parent households and 4 from single-mother headed households) felt that many Black fathers are limited in their ability to fulfill paternal duties because they did not have father figures to model proper behavior. The women credited slavery and subsequent economic marginalization with setting up family situations in which Black men are not included as essential parts of the family unit. As a result, the women argued, generations of men were left without father figures and as a result do not know how to father. They believed that the historical experience of slavery is directly connected to the contemporary experience of African American families through the lack of intergenerational transmission of values and skills related to fathering. For instance, Darlene, who grew up in a two-parent household, stated that, "In our community there's just a lot of broken homes and like a lot of Black men don't have those good examples, you know, to help them, to shape them into becoming a good dad. So I think that's always a big thing." When I asked Darlene why she thought that it was a "big thing" she responded that:

Some people try to break the cycle--like the negative cycle of the negativity that they see, but it's hard, you know. I've had cousins who have become fathers. And like for instance one of them--his father was incarcerated and now he is. And he tried to break that cycle but eventually he just fell into the same path. It's tough.

Mary, who spent most of her childhood not knowing anything about her father, echoed the sentiment that Black men have difficulty being engaged fathers, because many did not grow up with involved fathers.

There's so much going against them before they even become fathers. Like a lot of them, you know, because single parenting, especially with mothers, is such a big thing in the black culture. You know they have stuff going against them from the jump start. Like a lot of them don't grow up with fathers. So by the time they become fathers, they don't even know how to properly be a father. So I think there's a lot going against them.

Like Mary, several women expressed that the absence of positive father figures is linked to the difficulty many Black fathers face in engaging their children. Veronica, who had a distant relationship with her non-residential father, shared a personal example which illustrates Mary's point. She said, "He always said that his dad didn't care about him and he said he didn't want a relationship like that with his kids; which is kind of strange seeing how he still acts the same way his dad did."

Abigail, who grew up with very little contact with her non-residential father, stated that, "The fathers that take care of their kids, a lot of fathers I see, are the ones that had fathers growing up." Tamara, on the other hand, was confused that her father was not involved in her life, because like Abigail, she thought that men with actively engaged fathers become active fathers. She said, "I don't know though for somebody who was raised by their father why he would be like that. I didn't understand." Tamara felt that continuity in intergenerational fathering is vital for Black fathers. She used this frame to explain Black father absence. Furthermore, she was confused about why that frame did not help her make sense of her own father's disengagement.

Economic Marginalization

Seven women (4 from two-parent households and 3 from single parent households) argued that Black fathers are limited in their ability to parent because they face obstacles in the labor market which limit their abilities to contribute financially to

their children and families. According to Zemariah, “Black fathers, you know, have to put twice as much effort to get something.” Zemariah also shared that although her father remained connected to his family, he experienced role strain related to providing. She said:

I think for him, his main struggle is getting people to appreciate what he does. He feels like my mom and the other kids don’t appreciate that he works hard and tries to take care of them by working hard and getting money and giving them stuff sometimes. For most of the conversations I’ve gotten with him when he’s unhappy he said “they don’t appreciate me.”

Several women agreed with Zemariah’s assertion. Asia explained her opinion this way:

I feel like just the workforce available to black men, especially in Detroit, it’s not there. You know, to have your kids and try to be there for them and then be there for them financially and all that is a lot extra for black fathers because there is racism out there. It is very prevalent.

Nakia offered a personal example of how economic trials convince some Black fathers to disconnect from their families. She had very little interaction with her non-residential father, who married and had a son before he dated her mother. She shared that her father “married the girl he got pregnant at nineteen.” According to Nakia, her father “didn’t have a job back then, and he didn’t have a stable home.” She thought that financial strains were responsible for the failure of her father’s first marriage, and were related to father her father’s lack of involvement in her life:

I guess I would say, maybe that’s what made him feel like he couldn’t do it when he got my mama pregnant. He didn’t want to have to face

that same stress and those same problems he went through the first time around, so he kind of just shut off and maybe got scared.

For these women, economic marginalization constricts Black men's resources and leaves them unable to meet dominant provider role expectations. In many instances, the women used their fathers as examples to explain their opinions. Some women's fathers stayed in the same household as their children and partners, despite financial challenges. While other women, such as Nakia, revealed that their fathers chose to disconnect from families due to their economic barriers. Whether the women's fathers remained engaged or not, the women shared economic marginalization as a major barrier to Black fathers' happiness and ability to fulfill dominant father expectations.

Social Stigma

Recall the Keisha comment from Chapter 1 in which she said, "Their stereotype is like Black fathers don't never stick around." Keisha was not the only woman who discussed stereotypes or stigmas attached to Black fatherhood. Nine women spoke specifically about dominant stereotypes of Black fatherhood. They highlighted absence, irresponsibility, and failure to meet traditional role demands as common representations of Black fatherhood. Alexandra explained it this way:

There's always a stigma attached to them--like, Oh you ain't about nothing, you not going be here, you not going do this. So I definitely think there is a lot of pressure that they face to be good fathers.

Alexandra maintained that stigmas pose a challenge for Black men's opportunities to be good fathers. She identified the stigma as Black fathers being absent from family life and unreliable for performing fathering tasks. Interestingly, Alexandra's father was an intermittent/uninvolved non-residential father. As I will discuss in more detail in

Chapters 6 and 7, Alexandra felt that her father's infrequent involvement influenced her expressions of femininity. Additionally, she navigated her father's movement in and out of her life by attempting to accept whatever interactions they had. Like Alexandra, women who discussed stigma, as well as other barriers to fatherhood, negotiated their perceptions of societal trends and obstacles with their micro-level, interpersonal interactions with their fathers and relationships they witnessed within their family and community networks

Responsibility

Like Keisha, most of the women in my study spoke about the challenges of Black fatherhood and the responsibilities they expect fathers to fulfill. Claire, who grew up with a residential father noted that Black fathers face challenges, but they should still uphold their parenting responsibilities:

I mean black men in general face a lot of challenges, just in this, you know, white supremacist society. And even though those challenges are kind of like, okay that's how society is structured. They still have a certain like power and control over those challenges in the sense where they can make sure that they're prepared to take care of a family. They can further their education, they can just place themselves in a position to be the best man that they can be whereas um-as opposed to just stepping out into society and just making babies.

Although Claire asserted that Black fathers "face a lot of challenges," she emphasized that Black fathers have the responsibility to prepare for fatherhood by seeking education. Claire was not alone in her assertion that societal obstacles should not prevent Black fathers from fulfilling paternal responsibility. Her opinions as well as those of other women in the study demonstrate that they acknowledge barriers to Black

fatherhood not as an excuse or to justify disengaged Black fatherhood, but to contextualize the difficulties Black fathers face or to make sense of their choices.

However, a few women in the study felt differently. Nia, who had a close relationship with her father, said she did not have personal experience with a disengaged father. She also stated that she could not speak to the challenges of Black fatherhood because she had never experienced “stereotypical” Black father-child relationships. Pam, who had a disconnected relationship with her father, argued that instead of limiting Black fatherhood, some Black men may use dominant expectations of disengaged and uninvolved Black fatherhood as excuses to rationalize their lack of involvement. In fact, Pam and ten other women in the study emphasized the importance of responsibility over challenges associated with racism.

Ten women (5 from two-parent households and 5 from single-mother households) stated that they did not think that Black men face unique challenges to fathering. Nine of these women emphasized that all fathers, regardless of race, must be responsible and fulfill paternal obligations. When I asked the women if they thought that Black fathers faced special obstacles to being fathers they responded with the following:

Kamilah: I don't think so. I think it takes a man to be a father and if you're not grown and you're a little boy, you can't be a father. I don't think it has anything to do with race to be a father.

Veronica: A father is a father. It's not about what you look like and what color are you because if you want to be a good father, you'll be a good father whether you're whatever color, wherever you're from, whatever religion. If you want to be a good father, then you'll be a good father. It's the same characteristics for a good father in all cultures, though.

Tanya: I feel like that's just some way of them like trying to blame somebody else for their mistake, for what they did and they're not being men by blaming other people and they need to step up to the

plate and take responsibility or claim it and accept the fact that you messed up.

Lauren: I don't think so because to me if you like kind of lay down and you did what you did to produce a child, you should kind of have the courage to be a father also. You should want to help this-your seed get through life. You want to see it develop; you want to nurture it and stuff. So I don't think they have a, I guess like disadvantage or anything. I think it's the same. If you have a child, you have a child no matter what your race is.

To further prove her point Lauren compared Black fathers to Black women.

Like I think that's the great thing about black women. You know, that's a good thing and a bad thing about us because, you know, when hard times hit or you know, we have a child or something, we know it's time to step up. Like, I know I need to work this amount of hours so that we can get this, this, this, and this done. I know that I'm going to have to give this up so my child can, you know, have a better life. But, you know, eventually I can go back to that. So, I just think sometimes black men choose not to do it. They choose their own selfish needs and wants over their children's and I think black women don't really do that. Like we just are quick to say, Okay I know what I need to do, so I'm just going to go ahead and do it.

These women acknowledged that fathering is challenging. However, they emphasized that Black fathers were required to fulfill their responsibilities, just like parents of any race. These women's responses do not necessarily conflict with those of the other women in the study. Instead they emphasize the choice and responsibility linked to fatherhood.

Rather than totally rejecting or supporting controlling images of Black fatherhood, the women developed narratives by which they offered explanations for disengaged fatherhood, such as slavery, economic marginalization and social stigma based on historical experiences of Black men and discussed their opinions within the context of their personal experience with Black fathers. Additionally, some women cited their fathers as examples of men who defy the notion of the absentee Black father.

Another key component of their assertions is their discussion of responsibility. Instead of labeling Black fathers as wholly irresponsible, the women in my study argued that despite obstacles Black fathers must *decide* to be personally accountable. They differed in how much they emphasized responsibility as they shared personal examples of (ir)responsible Black fathers.

Most of the women in my study couched Black fatherhood within a larger narrative of the limitations racism has placed on Black men's labor market participation and the structure of the Black family. While they identify barriers, they also acknowledge that Black men must decide to engage children and family despite limitations. In the following section, I examine their narratives of Black father figures who perform traditional paternal roles as well as offer emotional support. Their reflections on social fathers nuance and disrupt controlling images of Black fatherhood.

Otherfathering in the Village

Despite studies documenting African American men's contribution to the function of families (Bowman, 1990; Coles & Green, 2010; McAdoo 1999; Taylor et al, 1990) and studies on the role of extended kin within Black family networks (Billingsley, 1992; Jarrett & Burton, 1999; McDonald & Armstrong 2001; Stack, 1975), the role of social fathers within African American family units remains under-researched (Hill, 1999; Lempert 1999; Richardson, 2009). Lempert's (1999) study is one of few studies in sociology to empirically explore the contribution of African American extended male kin to family life and resource networks. The study calls for a more expanded definition of Black fatherhood focused on the contributions of extended male kin to the nurturing and caretaking of children, rather than emphasizing biological fathers (Lempert, 1999).

Time after time, women in my study discussed the importance of social fathers for their lives and the lives of young and adult children, generally. Twenty-five women in my study shared that they had social fathers, but almost all of the women discussed the importance of father figures, especially when biological fathers are uninvolved in children's lives. Nine of the 25 women with social fathers were from two-parent households and sixteen were from single-mother headed households. However, even women without father figures talked about the importance of social fathers. For instance, four women without social fathers who grew up in two-parent households shared that they had strong "male influence" from grandfathers, uncles, and fictive kin. Additionally, several women from two-parent families stated that their fathers were father figures to other children. They used their personal experiences as examples or discussed their fathers acting as social fathers for extended kin and community members.

Like Lempert (1999), I use Collins' (2000) descriptive frame of social mothers to make sense of the father figures of the women in my study. Collins' study described multiple mothering roles within the African American community using the categories of bloodmothers (biological mothers) and othermothers. Othermothers are women such as aunts, grandmothers, fictive kin, or community figures who offer full or part-time care and support to children who are not biologically their own. The women in my study described interactions with social fathers that are similar to the care-giving of othermothers. They spoke at length about the importance of social fathers to their overall well-being and development. These otherfathers, often referred to as father figures or social fathers within social science research, were male-kin, such as grandfathers, uncles, or brothers, fictive-kin, or community fathers, such as pastors, coaches, or teachers.

In the following analysis, I focus on the narratives of one participant in each category in order to present a full picture of how social fathering operated in the women's everyday lives. This provides a clear explanation of the manner and means by which the women conceptualized the contribution of social fathers to their lives. While I focus on one woman for each category, multiple women experienced each form of social fathering. Most of the otherfathers fell into the categories of replacement and supplemental otherfathers, and were male-extended kin, often maternal kin. These men fulfilled traditional father roles, such as providing financial support, disciplining, or operating as "heads of household." The narratives of the women illustrate that these men actively participated in their lives as nurturing caretakers. The third category of social fathers I explore is that of the community father. I identify community fathers as men who are not biologically related to the women and who connect to the women through community involvement in locations such as schools and churches.

The Replacement Otherfather

Four women in my study had otherfathers who they viewed as *in place* of biological fathers. All of the women had intermittent/uninvolved biological fathers.

Mary's parents never married. They dated for a while after Mary's birth, but according to Mary, her parents separated because her father sold drugs and her mother was uncomfortable with his lifestyle. Her mother decided to live with her parents for childcare and financial support. In fact, at the time of our interviews, Mary's mother still lived in her parents' home as her primary residence.

Mary shared that her "grandfather and uncles really stepped in" during her childhood and adolescence. She shared, "My grandfather was basically my father in my

life like in every way.” I asked Mary what she meant by the statement that her grandfather was her father in every way. She replied:

Just in terms of the way he raised me. You know, I used to go out to the mall with my grandparents; I used to hang out with grandparents. People used to ask like, Hey is this your daughter? And my grandparents would say, No this is my granddaughter. I mean just so much I mean in the terms of, you know, encouragement, gift giving, just everything-my grandparents were always there. And my grandfather was definitely like my father.

Expanding on her assertion that her grandfather was her father in every way, Mary shared the following as an example of how involved her grandfather was as her otherfather.

My grandfather has taken me out to Take Your Daughter to Work day. I'm his granddaughter. He didn't do that with his other grandchildren; he did that with me, where he would take me to work. We would all go out to eat and it would just be like the two of us that would go out to eat.

After Mary's grandfather passed away, her maternal uncle became her primary otherfather, despite the fact that she began to have infrequent contact with her biological father during that time period. She said, “Since my grandfather has passed, my uncle is very much like a father.” She shared the following story as an example of her uncle fulfilling a father role.

We had our New Year's Eve church service. I went there and then I went over to a friend's house. And I was out and I told my mom I was going to go to his house. But I turned off my cell phone. And I didn't get any reception in the basement. We were just watching some ministers on television like throughout the night. And then it was five in the morning. And then I got a message from my uncle saying-my uncle (name), who is the oldest uncle and this was after my grandfather passed. And he left me a message saying, Young lady, this is totally unacceptable for you to be out at this time without calling anyone and letting them know where you are. Your mother is worried sick and so am I. He said, the moment you come home there's

going to be someone waiting for you. And I was like, Oh great. And I think I was eighteen at the time. I was not old but you know, I was older. My mom made a couple of phone calls. But then knowing that my uncle started making phone calls afterwards, that's what really changed things to me. And I mean there have been other times when you know.

In these examples, Mary described how her uncle reprimanded her, as well as expressed concern about her wellbeing. She relied on her uncle and grandfather as primary father figures. Not only did she view them as replacements, she viewed them as competent otherfathers who fulfilled her need for a paternal figure. Mary's narrative illustrates how some social fathers, particularly male kin, "step in" to replace biological fathers. Even as Mary's father attempted to reconnect with her, she prioritized her relationships with her uncle and grandfather, because she saw them as her fathers and men who contributed the most to her childhood development.

During her interviews, Mary disclosed that her grandfather disciplined her, gave her advice about life, contributed to her spiritual development, supported her in her academic achievements, and offered financial support. Mary credited her grandfather and uncle with demonstrating the behavior of "real men."

Until I really was able to embrace my uncles and my grandfather as father figures, it was difficult to realize what a man in my life was really like and what kind of man I should have in my life. As I began to really appreciate my grandfather, which it was a little too late to really start appreciating him before his death but just appreciating what a real man is like.

Mary related how she used her actual experience with her otherfathers to construct ideal expectations for fatherhood and masculinity.

Mary's descriptions of her "replacement" otherfathers show that social fathers can serve as primary father figures when biological fathers are unavailable and as positive

examples of fatherhood in the absence of biological fathers. Replacement otherfathers fulfill traditional paternal roles, such as disciplining and financial provision. Additionally, like Mary, most of the replacement otherfathers for women in my study were maternal.

The Supplemental Otherfather

Jean: I was never one of those girls who like, I'm searching for a father figure. I had my granddaddy. I love my daddy but he'll never be my granddaddy in my mind because my granddaddy was the person who put me to bed, bathed me, showered-bathed me, clothed me when my mom had to work. When she was working or even when she was sick she couldn't do certain things, he's the one who fed me even though granddad's cooking skills might give you a heart attack later on in life. My granddaddy he was always calling, you got something to eat at the house? Got some bread, got some milk?

Recall from the introduction that Jean's biological father did not live in the same household as her but visited with her at least once a week and provided financial support. While she saw her father frequently, Jean felt that their interactions were somewhat superficial. She expressed that her father was unaware of and failed to fulfill her everyday needs. For instance, several times during Jean's interview she pointed out that her father was unaware of the amount of financial hardship she faced. She juxtaposed that against how her grandfather checked on her physical and financial well-being on a daily basis. Jean's maternal grandfather supplemented her biological father's involvement by providing childcare, material support, and participating in the day-to-day activities. In the above quote, Jean shared that her grandfather performed significant caretaking roles. Jean's maternal grandfather was a trusted figure, provided financial support, and nurtured Jean through acts such as cooking and bathing. In addition, he supplemented the care her mother provided as well as the financial support and contact which her biological father provided.

Mothers often enlist otherfathers to provide material, emotional, and caretaking support (Lempert, 1999; Roy & Burton, 2007). The kinwork they perform is critical to the financial and emotional stability of the households. I found this to be true for women from single-mother headed households. The death of Jean's grandfather had negative repercussions for her household that extended beyond the emotional distress related to the death of a close family member.

That's my everything. That's the person I'm most like, that's the person who gives me drive, the hardest thing that ever happened to me, ever, is when he died. That was real difficult. And it was also difficult just because we didn't have as much anymore because he was always, you know, the person we could rely on when push came to shove. My mom just really had to ask him for something, he would always give it to her. He might complain a little bit because he an old black diabetical southern man. But he always came up with it. So it just was definitely a big change. And I always think that was my daddy.

Jean's narrative highlights otherfathers as nurturing father figures who provide key supplemental support for caretaking and other needs. Fifteen women shared that they had supplemental fathers; of those women eleven had non-residential fathers. Supplemental otherfathers step in to support the general needs of the family as well to satisfy paternal responsibilities. Similar to replacement social fathers, supplemental social fathers are trusted male figures for the daughters' mothers.

The difference between replacement and supplemental otherfathers is less about the roles or activities the social fathers perform. Instead it is about the role or meaning the women in my study assign to the otherfathers. For instance, while Jean's grandfather was pivotal to her existence in terms of social and financial support she did not view him as a replacement. Instead she compared her bloodfather to her grandfather and used examples of her grandfather's involvement to point out her biological father's shortcomings. Mary,

on the other hand, viewed her grandfather, and later her maternal uncle, as her primary father figures, even after her biological father expressed a desire and motivation to play a more significant role in her life.

I place the women who felt that their otherfathers replaced their biological fathers within the replacement otherfather group. I put women who were close to their otherfathers, but who did not see them as replacements for their biological fathers, within the group with supplemental otherfathers. Women with residential fathers discussed their supplemental otherfathers as additions to their biological fathers, whereas women with non-residential father shared that their supplemental othersfathers fulfill family needs and normative fathering tasks because their bloodfathers were, for the most part, unavailable. This is evident in Jean's narrative; she referred to her grandfather as her daddy, but asserted, on more than one occasion, that during her childhood and adolescence she had a relationship with her biological father and wanted a stronger one. As a result, her grandfather emerged as a father figure who fulfilled unmet needs and supplemented the contributions of Jean's mother and father.

In all but one instance the replacement and supplemental otherfathers were blood-related male-kin; unrelated males can also occupy these roles. Studies of low-income single-mother headed families find that mothers often rely on intimate partners to fulfill father roles (Roy & Burton, 2007). These fathers, at times, bring more harm than good to families, as there are increased reports of abuse within families with mothers' romantic partners as social fathers (Berger, Paxson, & Waldfogel, 2009). However, only one woman, Tamara, identified a mother's partner as a father figure. Tamara considered her brothers' father a father figure. However, she noted that at times he engaged her brother,

his sons, in activities and excluded her. Although Tamara felt supported by her father figure, she still yearned for her biological father. His absence became particularly acute when she experienced emotional and physical barriers from her father figure, as he actively and openly engaged his biological sons. Tamara also shared that her otherfather's involvement with her and her brothers served as an example of engaged non-residential fathering that she did not experience with her biological father.

Replacement and supplemental fathers occupy unique roles by which daughters see them as replacements for their biological fathers or as additional father figures in their lives. While they often performed tasks that are traditionally assigned to biological fathers, they were oftentimes not complete substitutions, as the women—and in the case of Tanya her social father—created clear boundaries on the level of involvement.

The Community Otherfather

Tanya did not remember her biological father and was told that she had not seen him since she was a couple of months old. Growing up, Tanya was not exposed to supportive male kin. However, when she became a teenager she developed a relationship with the pastor of her church. She explained, “It's hard growing up like without a father or even without a father figure. But um for me like the past um few years, that father figure has been my pastor.” Unlike replacement and supplemental otherfathers, community otherfathers are not biologically related to the women, but also linked to the women primarily through community connections. Six women had community otherfathers; five of those women grew up in two-parent households.

With the exception of her grandmother, Tanya felt as if she has very little adult support. She described her relationship with her church's pastor as a relationship in which she could be her authentic self and receive support and care. Tanya stated:

Basically, I tell him and my granny everything. I can go to him and talk to him about things. He knows more about me than my mom does. He just always supports me; he always encourages me even when I doubt myself. He always gives me good advice. Like whenever I'm down I could be like bawling, like crying and, you know and it's like he always knows the right thing to say. He's always there for me no matter what, like no matter how many mistakes I make, no matter how many times you know, he'll give me advice and I won't listen. And, you know, or he'll tell me not to do something but I'll do it anyway. I mean he's just always been there. He's got me through a lot of difficult times.

In addition to emotional support, Tanya said that her community otherfather also provided some material support.

Whenever I need something um like money-wise I can't help myself or my granny can't help me or whatever, I can go to him. He has no problem with like giving it to me.

Nonetheless, Tanya mostly sought her community father for emotional support. He was extremely important for her sense of self. I asked Tanya if she thought her pastor fulfilled paternal roles. She responded, "I think so, yeah. He's there emotionally, physically. I can call him. We talk for hours and hours." Tanya's relationship with her pastor highlights community otherfathers as important sources of moral and emotional support. Tanya's pastor extended his role as spiritual leader to become a community father for Tanya.

Community otherfathers offered emotional and sometimes material support and served as positive examples of fatherhood. Most emerged in the women's lives during adolescence and built their esteem and confidence. Male teachers, pastors, leaders of

extracurricular organizations and, in some instances, fictive kin acted as community fathers. These social fathers were primarily available for emotional support, were rarely integrated into the everyday family life of the women's family, and infrequently performed traditional tasks related to parenting such as disciplining, financial provision, or everyday contact.

Tanya and other respondents' engagement with community otherfathers reveals the importance of affiliations outside of family networks by which daughters can connect with positive, male-figures. However, women without otherfathers, such as Pam, had few, if any, examples of male-kin who were financially stable enough or emotionally available to step in as otherfathers. In addition, during their childhoods, Pam and some other women had limited contact with community organizations, such as churches or sports in which they could develop relationships with non-related otherfathers.

Talking about Social Fathers from an Intergenerational Context

Intergenerational kinwork represents one of many means by which otherfathering may occur. In order to illuminate the process by which this occurred, I describe Brenda's experiences with her biological father, otherfathers, and her daughter's father. Brenda grew up with both of her biological parents, and her maternal grandparents lived across the street. Her grandfather complemented the fathering of her biological father. Her grandfather was a source of advice, spiritual guidance, historical legacy, and racial pride when she was growing up. Brenda stated:

Well my grandfather just gave spiritual advice because he's religious or whatever. We talk about theoretical things or things that are happening in the world, in the black community, you know, talk about school and, you know, what's the next step after that and how it'll

affect me and how things were back in the day for him and, you know, just things like that.

Brenda credited her grandfather with educating her about Black life, and building her sense of self and community.

In November of her senior year of college, Brenda gave birth to her daughter. The father of Brenda's daughter provided financial support. Yet, at the time of the interview, Brenda felt he was not contributing as much to caretaking as Brenda desired. Brenda shared that she thought that her daughter's father would cease to be physically and emotionally available once he graduated from college and returned to his southern hometown. Although his emotional distance concerned her, Brenda shared that she was not completely worried. She said:

I know that I had it good with my father and my grandfather and all my male cousins and uncles and stuff. So just that she won't have her own father is my only fear, but she'll still have positive role models all around her so it's not like she'll be missing out too much, you know.

Throughout her childhood, Brenda experienced social and emotional support from her bloodfathers and otherfathers. She planned to continue relying on her extended male kin as sources of paternal support for her daughter. This intergenerational support is rarely evident in research regarding Black fathers. Brenda's expectation supports the notion of the African proverb that it "it takes a village to raise a child." Brenda's experiences, as well as those of my other study participants, unearth the key role social fathers play in the "village."

A question that emerges from this research is, what are the implications of the women's relationships with otherfathers for how they experienced their relationships with their biological fathers? From these narratives one might be led to think of social father

involvement in terms of whether it is of greater/lesser quality or preferred over the involvement of biological fathers. However, the women's stories point out that the implication of the social father relationship for the women's relationships with their biological fathers is more complicated.

Two issues emerge as ways to think about how other fathers may complicate daughters' relationships with their biological fathers. First, it is important to consider how maternal kin may work to limit interaction between daughters and their non-residential biological fathers. For instance, Mary's grandfather actively worked to limit Mary and her mother's interaction with her biological father. His presence as a provider and head of household afforded him the power to limit Mary and her mother's interactions. It is unclear from Mary's knowledge of the early stages of her parents' relationship how much her grandfather worked to end or limit her parents' interaction. Nevertheless, Mary was aware that her grandfather did not care for her biological father. This is similar to research which finds that family networks work to limit the negative influence of "renegade relatives maternal" (Stack & Burton, 1993). It is in these moments that families recruit other family members to perform the tasks of disconnected family members (Roy & Burton, 2007; Stack & Burton, 1993). In Mary's case, her mother and grandparents tried to protect her from her father who sold illegal drugs, and her maternal grandfather and uncle performed normative paternal roles. The implications of this kinwork for Mary's relationship with her father and her emotional life are unclear. However, from Mary's report, we know that his movement in and out of her life during her adolescence angered her and left her feeling that he was not a significant figure in her life.

Second, it is essential to investigate how otherfathers alleviate material and emotional needs and thus give daughters the impression that they do not need their non-residential biological fathers. All of the sixteen women from single-mother headed households who had otherfathers receive significant financial and emotional support from their otherfathers. For instance, when I asked Tanya about whether she would contact her biological father anytime soon, she said no. She felt that her community father met her needs as an adult daughter. Brenda's narrative also speaks to these concerns. While she desired her daughter's father to be emotionally available to her daughter she shared that her daughter would receive emotional attention from otherfathers who are maternal kin.

However, as I will detail in Chapter 7, for most women with disconnected relationships with their biological fathers, while the presence of otherfathers meet several needs, the women had lingering desires to get to know their biological fathers or to at least have some personal explanation for his absence. Recall Jean's relationship with her grandfather. She referred to him as her "daddy." However, Jean emphasized her biological father as her primary father figure, and wanted him to be more involved. In fact, among the 16 women with nonresidential fathers who had otherfathers, all of them but Tanya expressed that they would like an improved relationship with their biological fathers, even Mary. So while they experienced contact with otherfathers they all lamented their relationships with their biological fathers and wanted an improved relationship. So, in many instances, otherfathers emerge as key figures but not as complete correctives for the disengagement many women feel from their biological fathers.

Otherfathers were meaningful for women with nonresidential fathers in that they represented caring adult males who were sources of positive male support and key figures

in the “village.” For many women from single-mother-headed households these fathers were their only source of adult male support. The categories I created reflect the types of interactions they had with their fathers, but moreover reflect how the women framed or understood their relationships with their otherfathers.

When we look beyond biological fathers, we find that otherfathers are important for understanding the priorities of the women in my study. Two key themes emerge with regard to the meaning making and priorities of the women in my study: 1) that the women actively frame and define the roles that they wish their otherfathers would fulfill and assign him a status in relation to their biological fathers; 2) that otherfathers, while important, and at times vital to how the women lived their everyday lives, particularly among women from single-mother-headed households, did not completely replace the emotional yearning for paternal involvement from biological fathers.

Discussion

In this chapter I examined how all of the women in my study made sense of controlling images of Black fatherhood, and how twenty-five women’s experiences with otherfathers expand traditional conceptualizations of Black fathers. This chapter moves us toward a deeper understanding of Black fatherhood from the perspective of Black women by exploring young adult daughters’ complex meaning making regarding their ideal views and actual experiences with Black fathers.

Often citing their own experiences as support, 90% of the women in my study argued that Black fathers encounter obstacles related to racism, specifically ones stemming from the breakdown of the Black family, employment barriers, and stigma. Of those women, 81% felt that race-based societal barriers limit Black men’s ability to

parent. Most of the women in my study shared that structural barriers challenge and limit Black fathers' ability to fulfill paternal responsibilities. However, 27% of the women in my study, including some women who spoke at length about structural obstacles, believed external challenges to fathering, such as economic marginalization, were not adequate reasons for neglecting paternal responsibilities.

Building on these findings I explored social fathering as a way by which the women in my study shared experiences which defy obstacles and negative imagery typically associated with Black fathers. Their lives with otherfathers complicate and expand mainstream conceptualizations of Black fatherhood in three ways. First, consistent with a few studies of Black father-child relationships (Coley, 2003; Connor & White 2006; Richardson, 2009), the women in my study embraced conceptualizations of Black fatherhood which included biological, or blood, fathers as well as otherfathers in the form of extended and unrelated kin. Second, the women's narratives provided clear examples of Black men assuming responsibility and choosing to be physically present in their extended family and community networks. Third, the women's rich descriptions of otherfathers illuminate the myriad ways that otherfathers contribute to the everyday lives of Black women and girls, particularly through acts of nurturing. Their descriptions highlight how otherfathers in the form of extended kin and community fathers enact responsibility, extend childcare, and nurture within Black family relationships.

I grouped my study participants' experiences with otherfathers into the three categories of replacement otherfathers, supplemental otherfathers, and community otherfathers. I found that maternal male kin played key roles as replacement and supplemental otherfathers by offering economic, social, and emotional support.

Community fathers, who were usually teachers, pastors, or other community figures, offered routine support related to self-esteem and confidence, and at times they also offered material support.

There have not been enough studies to explore the complex nature of Black male involvement within family units in which they are not biological fathers. We are particularly limited in our understandings of how Black men operate within extended kin networks (Coley, 2001; Connor & White, 2006; Lempert 1999; Richardson, 2009). Black feminist scholars as well as other recent researchers have called for an expanded approach to studying Black fatherhood which includes extended kin, caregiving, and nurturance (Collins, 2004; Hill 1999; hooks, 2001; Neal, 2005). However, due to previous research focused on female-centered networks and members such as grandmothers and aunts, we know little about the complexity of Black male childcare and kinship support. Whenever Black otherfathers are studied, the emphasis is upon the contribution of male-kin and community fathers to the lives of Black men and boys, particularly coaches, teachers, and mentors. However, the narratives of women in this study uncover otherfathers as significant to the support and development of Black women and girls.

Social fathers occupy a unique space within the study of Black fatherhood. For the women in my study otherfathers provided a bridge between actual and ideal fathering. In some instances, women's relationships with social fathers were their only source of consistent nurturing and supportive interaction with an adult male. For women with strong, healthy relationships with their biological fathers, social fathers became yet another example of loving, interactions with an adult male figure. My exploration of the

women's narratives acknowledges otherfathering as a key aspect of Black family life, by which dominant tropes of Black fatherhood are complicated by loving otherfathers who assume paternal responsibility among extended kin or community networks.

Chapter 6

EMBRACING THE WARRIOR AND THE LADY:

Women's Conceptualizations of the Contribution of Fathers to Their Development of Womanhood

The concepts of the “warrior” and a “lady” emerged simultaneously within the narratives of women. This chapter is an exploration of why these contradictory tropes endured within the women’s narratives and the ways in which the women incorporated their fathers enacted the “warrior” and the “lady” in their descriptions. Using Hill’s (2005) terms the “warrior” and the “lady,” I explore the meaning women made of gendered messages they received from their fathers. Daughters felt that their ability to exhibit “warrior” characteristics of emotional and financial independence, self-sufficiency, and assertiveness in public spaces (particularly school, career, community activities, and even the early stages of dating) were significantly influenced by the guidance of their fathers. They also asserted that independence must be counterbalanced, by efforts to be a “lady” within the context of intimate relationships. Lady-like behavior is characterized by subordinate and nurturing behavior within private spaces.

There is limited research on the meanings Black daughters assign to their fathers’ acts of gender socialization. My findings contribute to research on the intergenerational

transfer of gender expectations within Black families. This is important because few studies explore racialized gender socialization within Black families (Hill, 2002; Mandara, Murray, & Joyner, 2005). I define racialized gender socialization as the way people learn societal gender expectations for their racial group (Andersen, 1993; Hill, 2002). Most studies of Black gender socialization focus on mother-child or father-son interactions. The few studies of fathers' socializing behaviors for daughters focus on verbal communication regarding sexual behavior, and daughters' psycho-social outcomes, like self esteem. Consequently, we know little about what and how Black fathers contribute to their daughters' visions of Black femininity, and even less about how daughters incorporate their fathers into their gender development narratives. The women's assertions that fathers play a role in their expressions of Black femininity add to this body of literature.

Women with supportive fathers discussed the influence of their fathers' *presence* (in the areas of emotional and physical availability) on their independence, especially in regards to financial independence, academic achievement, general self-sufficiency, and their views about sexual expression. Their personal daughter-father relationships influenced the types of Black femininity they found possible for themselves. Women from two-parent households with supportive fathers felt their interactions with their fathers prepared them to be independent in public spheres and "lady-like" in intimate spaces.

By contrast, women with uninvolved fathers discussed the influence of their fathers' *absence* (in terms of emotional and physical availability) on their (in)ability to be independent and make good dating and relationship decisions. Women with non-

residential fathers, particularly uninvolved ones, felt that their lack of exposure to an engaged father hampered their abilities to engage in positive interactions with males. Some relied on other fathers and male friends for information; however, their perspectives were always that they were *missing* something. For them, achieving a balance of being a warrior and a lady was something they grasped at but failed to reach. They wanted to be warriors and ladies, but felt they did not have immediate understanding of how to perform as a lady. The distinction between the women's narratives is in how they conceptualized their chances of accessing the lady trope.

Overall, all of the women argued that fathers *are* important for their ability to be independent (warriors) and nurturing in terms of behavior and physical demeanor (ladies). I reveal that the women theorized about the contribution of Black fathers to daughters' preparation for Black femininity. They argued that fathers are important for women's expressions of lady-like behaviors. They believed that women without supportive, engaged fathers "search for daddy" in ways that leads daughters to: 1) feel unprepared to engage in healthy heterosexual relationships, 2) develop emasculating behaviors and 3) feel less confident.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of controlling images of black womanhood. I follow with an analysis of how the women identify with the images of the warrior and the lady. Afterwards, I examine how the women include their fathers in their discussions of their performance of the warrior and the lady.

Black Girl Socialization and Controlling Images

Controlling images of Black femininity are depictions of Black womanhood that stand in sharp contrast to dominant expectations of womanhood that expect women to be

mothers, nurturers, and subordinate to men (Collins, 2004; Hill, 2004). Collins (2004) defines controlling images as stereotypical gendered representations of African Americans within Western popular culture and research. These images constrain and define Black women's feminine expressions and serve as societal templates by which Black women adhere to dominant and subgroup gender expectations. The warrior and lady terms reflect images of Black femininity that are steeped in the sociology of gender literature (Hill, 1999; Hill, 2004). The warrior theme rests in discussions of strength and independence (Hill, 1999; Hill, 2004), while the lady theme rests in images of subordination and fragility (Andersen, 1993; (Hill, 1999; Hill, 2004). Understanding these images is important for making sense of the women's descriptions of the types of Black womanhood their fathers influenced and the dominant images on which they drew to make sense of themselves.

Research on Black women and girls finds that Black girls are socialized to be independent and nurturers¹⁶ (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Hill 1999; Hill, 2004; hooks, 1992; Ladner, 1971). Across class and family formations, they are taught at early ages to embrace the strength narrative in addition to mainstream feminine characteristics (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Hill, 2005). Black parents choose to socialize their daughters in this manner to prepare them to support future families, keep them from depending on husbands for financial stability, and to avoid dominant stereotypes of

¹⁶ In recent decades parents across racial categories in the United States are raising their daughters to be independent, as well as nurturing. For instance, Martin (1997) found that middle class parents encouraged their daughters to be independent and active in school and extra-curricular activities. Although the practice of socializing daughters to be independent and lady-like may traverse racial categories, research has documented the pervasiveness of these tropes among African-American parents for several decades. Additionally, African-Americans engage in these acts in response to social and structural barriers. Consequently, my discussion of strength, independence, and lady-like behavior centers on the experiences of Black women and girls due to their unique historical and contemporary social, cultural, and familial experiences.

African-Americans as lazy and overly sexual (Higginbotham 1981; Higginbotham & Weber, 1992). Hill (2004) found Black families want their daughters to be warriors, women and girls who are fiercely independent and self-sufficient. At the same time, daughters are expected to be ladies in private spheres. The expectation is that they fulfill dominant expectations of women as subordinate and nurturing roles in private (family) spaces.

The warrior images that Black parents socialize their daughters to perform are based on controlling images of Black womanhood such as the strong black woman (SBW). The strong Black woman is an archetype of Black womanhood that characterizes them as strong, independent, and able to withstand intense financial, emotional, and social obstacles (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009; Gillespie, 1984; Hill, 2004; Hooks, 1981; Irvin Painter, 1997; Morgan, 1999; Scott, 1991; Townsend-Gilkes, 2001; Wallace [1978] 1990). Her strength fortifies her to withstand seemingly insurmountable obstacles within the spheres of family, work, and community.

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009) identifies strong black woman (SBW) discourse among African American women as strength narratives. These narratives emphasize independence, self-sufficiency, and perseverance. She defined strength as “the defining quality of black womanhood (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009, 1).” While the SBW script has been linked to depression, stress, obesity, and other health issues among African American women, it is highly esteemed among African Americans and within dominant discourse as a mantra or model for Black women to attain (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). Like Beauboeuf-Lafontant, I discuss the SBW within a larger discourse of strength

narratives. Strength narratives characterize Black women as steadfast in the face of obstacles, full of perseverance, and able to withstand hardships without complaint.

The Black Lady is defined by Lubiano (1992) and Collins (2000) as a “the hardworking Black woman professional who works twice as hard as everyone else (Collins, 2000).” The archetype of the Black Lady symbolizes “middle class Black women who represent a modern version of the politics of respectability advanced by the club women (Collins, 2000).” The politics of respectability movement, from which the controlling image of the Black Lady is an outgrowth, began in the late nineteenth century as an effort by Black women (often middle class) involved in the club movement to encourage Black women to engage in “respectable” behavior in public as a way to defy stereotypes of Black women as amoral, hypersexual, and irresponsible (Collins 1998; Higginbotham, 1981; Lubiano, 1992). While the efforts were linked to racial self-help, they were often a class-based indictment of poor and working class women and failed to acknowledge their alternative public behaviors and survival strategies in response to racism. Emphasis on personal behavior focused the attention on individuals as opposed to the institutional aspects of racism and discrimination (Collins, 2000; Higginbotham, 1981; Hill, 2004).

The Black Lady is a modern-day version of the respectable Black woman and is often considered the opposite of the Black welfare-queen, a stereotype of poor Black mothers who depend on government assistance and fail to adequately care for their children. Within romantic relationships the Black Lady is seen as someone who has “jobs that are so all-consuming that they have no time for men or have forgotten how to treat them.” As a result, the Black Lady emerges as a figure of admiration in terms of her

career aspirations and accomplishments, but is framed as someone who is not able to engage in dominant expectations of women to become a loving partner within a heterosexual relationship. Consequently, the Black Lady is not fully desirable as model of Black femininity for some parents who endorse their daughters' development as nurturers and as available for intimate relationships with men.

In the following section, I investigate the ways that the women incorporated the warrior (strength) and the lady into their conceptualizations of Black femininity.

Strength Narratives

She don't play no games. She don't take no mess. She got it going on.
She doing her own thing, independent (Erin).

In a sing-song voice, Erin described her definition of a strong black woman (SBW). Her definition had a rhythm to it like the chorus of a rhythm and blues or rap song. Her head and neck moved with the rhythm of her words. The rhythm she expressed in her tone and movements signified how much the idea of the independent woman infused her conceptualization of Black femininity. It literally moved her. Erin identified a strong black woman as: independent (*She doing her own thing, independent*); headstrong (*She don't play no games. She don't take no mess*); and someone to be admired (*She got it going on*).

My interviewees identified strength narratives and aspects of dominant feminine cultural scripts as parts of their gender ideology. Considering the pervasiveness of strength narratives within African American communities and mainstream society, it is not surprising that controlling images of Black femininity emerged in their narratives. The characteristics of independence, emotional resiliency, and perseverance emerged

over and over again as they described themselves and ideal (Black) womanhood. For many of the women, notions of strength and perseverance permeated their narratives.

Abigail: I always had to cut the grass and take care of the house like I said, you know, strong black woman knows how to do everything.

Melanie: I've spoken to a few people who, I guess have been in my situation academically and maybe even socially and they are just so discouraged, you know, they want to give up and I've never felt that way—although I've been in that same or similar situation. I've just been, you know I just keep going. You can have your periods when you break down. I guess it is strong because you can have your periods when you break down and you want to give up but you know you know can't because—or else you're not going to make it you're not going to live you know.

For Abigail, Black women's strength lies in their ability to perform traditional and non-traditional gendered tasks and roles. She based her notions of such strength on a Black woman's ability to accomplish stereotypical male roles outside of the home and typical female activities within the home. Her feelings are aligned with the results of a study of Black girls who lived in single-mother-headed households that finds that the girls perform manual labor chores that are usually seen as masculine and care-taking responsibilities at early ages which foster a sense of independence and self-sufficiency (Mandara, Murray, & Joyner, 2005). These girls perceived themselves as more masculine than girls who live in two-parent households see themselves. As a result, strength is intertwined with the family roles Black girls perform to meet family needs and their perception that their performance of these roles makes them more independent and at times less feminine.

Melanie focused on her perseverance and couched her strength in her ability to press through tough times. In addition to describing how they were personally strong, the women described their general views of the strong black woman.

Zemariah: When I think of like a strong black woman I think of a woman who has been able to like get past hurdles where it comes to race and gender and has done something that's you know, extraordinary or something.

Kamilah: I think of someone who is independent, able to stand on her own feet, doesn't need anyone to back her up or help her financially or in anyway, has a backup plan for everything. Can handle her own affairs, in the face of like any adversities.

For Zemariah, performing extraordinary tasks is an ordinary undertaking for strong black women. According to Zemariah these tasks involve perseverance, struggle, and defeating impossible odds. Kamilah adds financial independence to the overall assertion that strength requires that a woman “can handle her own affairs, in the face of like any adversities.” The women discussed themselves and strong black women in general through the lens of their ability and desire to take care of themselves, and through the lens of what it means to persevere and not need or want anyone around.

They endorsed strong black womanhood as something that Black women should aspire to. Alexandra put it this way, “I just think that a strong black woman is what every Black woman should aspire to be and what every Black woman needs to be to live in this world, especially in America.” While some women saw themselves as SBW, many saw themselves as *becoming* SBW. They identified with elements of the strength narrative, particularly perseverance and resilience, but felt they still had parts to enact, such as independence (particularly financial independence). Kamilah described her enactment of strong black womanhood in the following manner:

I don't know if I got there yet. I'm not standing on my own two feet alone. I'm still dependent upon my parents in some ways. And I like to think I have a back-up plan for everything, but— The most thing that I don't think I'm a strong black woman yet is because I'm not standing up on my own two feet.

Overall, the women supported or had limited critique of strength narratives. In her study of strength narratives among Black women, Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009) defined three categories by which the women in her study attached themselves to strength narratives: 1) accommodation—when women stick to “shoulds” and “have-tos” and then respond in ways that they believe are strong; 2) muted critique—when women internally and quietly question their strength and the strength model of Black femininity; 3) recognized vulnerability—when women use strength narratives in addition to other options to select the most appropriate responses to difficult situations.

Most women in my study were in the accommodation phase, but some expressed muted critique and no one possessed recognized vulnerability. In describing her definition of a strong black woman, Julia shared her muted critique:

You know, you have to be long suffering. There are things that, I think, we have to be but who wants to be long suffering, you know? Who wants to be enduring? It's good things but like I don't want to be suffering all the time. I don't want to be enduring a lot but, it's your cross to bear. And unfortunately and like it's interesting the way your gender and the color of your skin automatically I think gives you a little bit more of a struggle, or a different struggle. Just because even if you feel you're not, you know, that's what you have to be, especially if you're around here.

Julia's comment was representative of others who were critical of strong black womanhood. She did not want to be “long suffering” but felt that her identity as a Black woman placed her in situation where she had no choice but to struggle. However, even among women with muted critique or women who thought women of other races could be strong, the strength narrative remained their primary reference for describing womanhood.

Pam: I think that's used too much. And so I don't use it because I don't feel like all black women are strong like. It's used like that a lot, like just because you're black you're strong but I don't really think that's true.

MJ: So what is a strong black woman?

Pam: I think like being able to be independent and even if you like make mistakes then just being able to learn from it and being able to learn from other people's mistakes.

Pam's quote demonstrates the endurance of controlling images prevalent within the Black community as well as mainstream discourse. She resisted the idea that all Black women are strong, but she was aware of restrictive cultural forms that define Black women as strong. Further, she described strong black womanhood in terms similar to typical explanations. A few women were careful to say not all Black women are strong and not all strong women are Black. Even though Pam did not fully endorse the strength narrative, she found it to be a dominant narrative that frames Black femininity.

Women's Creation of the Warrior-Lady

True critiques were not really a rejection of the warrior or strength narratives, but represent their notions that women should be strong in addition to fulfilling dominant expectations of femininity. Strength narratives, particularly, the Black Lady, remained the controlling images and discourses from which the women in my study made sense of their self presentation, achievement, ambitions, and womanhood. The women saw independence, self-reliance, and emotional resiliency as essential for their survival and upward mobility. However, for them, being lady-like helped them cultivate personal relationships, particularly heterosexual relationships and marriages. The warrior-lady encapsulates the women's desire to be a warrior (strong, independent) and a lady

(sexually respectable, restrained, and nurturing). Brenda embodied this by describing her ideal Black woman in the following manner:

They're still strong, and they still take on roles that are traditionally male, you know, being like a CEO and taking the lead on decisions. But they still know how to be women and still know how to, you know, dress nice and pretty and roll their hair and be-put on makeup and, you know, still be a woman, still be the things that a woman needs to be, like nurturing to her children and, you know, caring.

Notice that Brenda stated that an ideal Black woman achieves high ranking in her career field, and fulfilled traditional female roles of being attractive, nurturers, and care-takers. Her description encapsulates the women's "warrior-lady" gender strategy. When the women discussed their ideal constructions of young Black womanhood, I found that they wanted to perform aspects of both the warrior and lady. In their personal lives, they shared that they wanted to be nurturing in intimate relationships. As college students they started non-profits, worked in health organizations, and were leaders on campus, with plans to achieve high profile careers as doctors, attorneys, and teachers, to name just a few examples. They desired to achieve what they viewed as a balanced expression of Black femininity. They believed being a warrior-lady would allow them to reconcile dominant expectations with in-group realities for Black women which, for instance, include high rates of single-motherhood, across class (Marsh & Dickson, 2008).

The warrior seems to be a counter-narrative to the dominant narrative of fragile womanhood or lady-like behavior; nevertheless, the women in my study embraced this paradox. They did not wholly embrace the idea of being lady-like, as they saw independence, self-reliance, and emotional resiliency as essential not only to their survival, but to their upward mobility. However, they viewed being lady-like as a key aspect of helping them maintain personal relationships, particularly their aspirations for

heterosexual relationships and marriages, and to avoid becoming a “Black Lady.” Thus, they understood Black femininity as in step with models of strength (warrior), but as oriented towards achieving expectations of dominant femininity for family life.

Role of Fathers in Constructing Black Femininity

As I revealed earlier in this chapter, Black girls are socialized into gendered roles at early ages. Much of what we know about intergenerational Black gender ideology transfer for Black girls is based on mother-daughter transfer. As I detailed in Chapter 1, research demonstrates that fathers are important to how girls perform academically and socio-emotionally (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Carlson, 2006; Coley, 1998 & 2003; Cooper, 2009). Additionally, lay materials like *Whatever happened to daddy’s little girl?* and other books point to the fact that Black women found fathers to be important to their ability to engage in heterosexual relationships and understand males romantically and collegially. Therefore, it becomes important to broaden our understanding of how Black women factor their fathers into their constructions of womanhood. Missing from academic research and lay discourse regarding Black women’s development is the contribution of fathers to the meaning Black women make of themselves. It is important to explore whether fathers contribute to intergenerational transmission of gender ideology, and if so what ideas or systems of logic they transfer, and also what daughters think they should transfer.

I find that the women in my study believed that their fathers, whether supportive or disconnected from their lives, influenced how they thought about and expressed Black womanhood. Sara summarized it best when she said, “I think a father teaches their daughter how to be independent and how to be secure but at the same time living within a

society that is dominated by men.” Moreover, I find that the women’s experiences with their fathers influenced how they assembled together a presentation and understanding of Black femininity that encompassed dominant notions of “lady-like” femininity and group specific cultural emphasis on strength and independence. I analyze below how fathers of the women in the study contributed to their development as the warrior-lady. The women argued that women’s ability to “do” or balance the warrior *and* the lady is influenced by whether they have close relationships with their fathers.

Independence and sexual expression emerged as prominent themes in how the women discussed their feelings about their womanhood in relation to their fathers. In the following section, I use independence and sexual expression as two ways of gaining insight: first, because these are the categories the women emphasized as they discussed womanhood; second, because independence is an important theme of the strength narrative and previous studies have identified it as a major goal of Black parents.

Doing Independence

There was a striking difference in how the women in my study discussed their development of independence. Women with supportive residential fathers described their fathers as active contributors to their development. In contrast, women with non-residential fathers described their development of independence as a consequence of their fathers’ absence, at times describing it as a direct response to his absence.

Biological fathers and otherfathers were important figures in the women’s achievement narratives. Most of the women in my study were the first people in their family to attend a four year college or university and saw higher education as a means to achieve upward mobility. They spoke at length about attending college and performing

well academically in high school in order to be financially independent and attain career success. They identified their biological fathers as important parts of their achievement narratives.

Academic achievement and extracurricular activities, particularly sports, were the primary avenues by which women with supportive fathers, especially resident fathers, identified their fathers' contribution to their development of independence and self-sufficiency. They described their fathers' involvement as varied, from hands-on assistance (such as with homework, job, and college opportunities) to words of encouragement, to limited verbal or material assistance and support. Women with supportive biological fathers shared the most experiences with fathers who offered words of encouragement and help with homework. Daughters said that their fathers were unable to offer much assistance with college-level work because of their educational backgrounds.

Women stated that their fathers emphasized higher education as a means to attain financial independence through careers. In particular, they argued that their fathers wanted them to have their own income, separate from a romantic partner's. According to the daughters, their fathers often advised them to prioritize their scholastic studies over dating. The following is an example from Sara:

He wanted to put in my mind that I'm going to college and if he's paying for it, then I'm not going to be one of these girls who comes here looking for their marriage certificate, like I need to be about myself and I need to be focused on my education. Even to this day, if my father calls I'm like, Dad I'm in love. He's like, that's cool. How's your soc class coming?

Sara and other women with supportive fathers shared that their fathers admonished them to focus on their studies.

Several women also shared that sports and extracurricular activities became spaces for their fathers to transfer values related to perseverance. The women shared that their fathers gave them advice and encouragement that increased their confidence in their sports and which became mantras they used as they completed difficult tasks in school or in facing personal obstacles. Sports and academics served as spaces by which the daughters said their fathers transferred values related to independence and perseverance. Jada said that her father motivated her during her sport competitions with the following quote, “Impossible is nothing.”

Women with disconnected relationships with their fathers (especially ones with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers) felt capable within academic settings to determine their level of adult independence. They shared that they pursued academic excellence *because* of their fathers’ absence. Abigail said, “The lack of a father makes you that way.” Higher education represented an opportunity to ensure their upward mobility and job opportunities. Zoey, Naomi, and others shared that one reason they pursued higher education was to avoid being like their fathers, who they believed wasted educational opportunities. Some women shared that they also achieved academically to avoid the occupational and financial fate of their mothers.

Abigail: You've got to be strong, you've got to be able to do for yourself, you know? Like, you want to have a husband, you want to have a family, but if it don't work out, you ought to be able to stand on your own two feet. He's like the prime example of why I need to be able to care for myself. I mean, he is my inspiration to make sure that I never have to depend on somebody else.

Alexandra: I think that the strength and the resolve that I believe that black women possess and I possess as a black woman, came from interactions with him because he didn't help at all-or very limited help-with raising me either financially or other-or emotionally wise. So just the fact that I'm still able to be the strong woman just to me

further pushes like the resolve and strength that black woman have.
You know what I'm saying.

These women observed the effect of limited skills and education when coupled with a partner who has limited financial resources. They shared that they preferred to marry, but planned to achieve professional and academic success just in case they become single mothers.

This idea of being prepared to handle worst case scenarios is aligned with the strength narratives of persevering and accomplishing extraordinary tasks, often in response to what the women believe to be the status of many Black men. Given that their fathers were disengaged and given the significant numbers of single-mother-headed households within the Black community as a whole, women with non-residential fathers figured that there was a possibility that they would have a partner who would not be involved in their children's lives or be a life-long intimate partner. Therefore, they believed it was important to prepare educationally so that they could handle the worst-case-scenario of being a single mother without financial resources or emotional support. In these instances, the meaning they made of their disengaged relationships with their fathers informed how they chose to strategize and prepare for their future family roles, particularly as mothers.

Being a Lady

The idea of "lady-like" behavior emerged in conversations about intimate heterosexual relationships. They identified "virtuous," sexually demure behavior and respectability as positive behaviors, and dependence as an undesirable attribute of "lady-like" behavior. I find that in the area of sexual agency, the women believed that lack of

interaction with biological fathers or father figures is detrimental to women's facility with males and influences their level of promiscuity and aggression. They expressed this opinion in different ways, depending on their relationships with their fathers.

Women from two-parent households argued that their fathers were essential to their ability to express nurturing femininity, or be a "lady" in intimate settings. Women with non-residential fathers, on the other hand, shared that they felt less capable in heterosexual, romantic relationships without the guidance of their biological father. As a result, I find that the women felt that fathers are important for women's development of lady-like behaviors, and without a supportive daughter-father relationship, some women felt that daughters are left on their own to figure out how to successfully navigate platonic and romantic interactions with men.

The women stated that their fathers contributed to their sexual agency by encouraging them to engage in lady-like behavior. This often involved diminished public presentations of sexuality and limited sexual encounters in dating relationships. Recall from the previous section that residential fathers, and some non-residential fathers, encouraged their daughters to prioritize their academic pursuits over intimate relationships. The daughters asserted that their fathers wanted them to delay dating and sexual interaction because they wanted them to focus on their career paths. Some women shared detailed examples of their fathers' advice regarding interaction with males or sexual activity. Jada shared this tradition in her family as an example of her father's gender socialization:

He'd take us out on dates and like show us how guys are supposed to treat girls. He would open the door. Once a month we had dates. We got to pick the place. We got dressed up. And he'd come pick us up from the house, like come ring the doorbell. He'd take us to the place;

we'd go the movie and then like out to eat. He'd pay for the bill. Like all the time, like, this is how a guy should treat you. His whole thing was kind of more so how guys should treat us.

Only a few women with residential fathers had date nights with their fathers like Jada. However, most of the women with residential fathers shared that their fathers taught them how to behave in dominant feminine ways within dating and intimate relationships. They felt these lessons improved their understanding of heterosexual interactions and increased their confidence within those settings.

Some women with residential fathers said that their fathers socialized them to subvert controlling images of Black women as emasculating and hypersexual. They shared that their fathers wanted them to be easy-going and non-threatening in public spaces and warned them not to be dominating in personal relationships. The women said their fathers communicated their perspectives by commenting on their demeanor and by making general comments about women. Devin said that her father repeatedly told her and her sister to be sexually demure. She recalled:

I remember when we were younger he used to always say, don't sleep around and don't be a whore and don't do things like that. But it might of worked because I didn't lose my virginity until like last year, which was like twenty, so I think that's pretty decent in today's.

Devin shared that her father not only made demands about her sexual activity, but that his admonishments may have influenced her to delay her sexual activity.

Some women, particularly women with supportive residential and non-residential fathers, shared that their fathers told them that they did not need romantic partners because they themselves would take care of them. In these instances, the women shared that their fathers did not want them to become financially or emotionally dependent on an

intimate partner. They also shared that they knew that their fathers would literally protect them if a boyfriend or date mistreated them.

Likewise, women shared that they felt more equipped to make healthy dating decisions because their fathers taught them about what men want and think. Women like Kamilah and Asia felt that their positive interactions with their fathers helped them to be confident and not look for other men to help them feel good about themselves.

Kamilah: I would tell him what happened when this dude tried to approach me and we would laugh about it and he'd say, Yeah I used to do that. And if someone does this then this. You know, we talk that way.

Asia: He'll say, don't let no guy gas you up, stay on full. And that's how I feel (laughter). And I love it. And I said, you know what, you right.

Claire considered her father as an example of the type of man she should date:

Very supportive, very encouraging. Always put that sense of confidence within me, especially that male perspective. Like, you know, you're a beautiful woman or you're smart, you're gifted. You don't need to compromise. Don't let people take you for granted, especially not a guy and everything. And so he always gave that strong male perspective of telling me my worth and then telling me what I was worthy of like in a man and what I shouldn't go for and everything. And, and so that was helpful.

However, the narratives of women with intermittent and disengaged fathers were often lacking in concrete examples of activities they did with their fathers or advice their fathers gave them regarding the development of their womanhood. In fact, most felt more capable of enacting the strength narrative than the lady role in their fathers' absence. Pam explained it this way:

I think it's possible to be a strong woman without a father. Like, I think just my experience has made and contributed to that because

that's just one of the things that I've learned from. I think that it would be easier for a woman if she can get some type of advice from a man and be able to talk to a man, like a grown man, about certain things that you can't really know—you can't get from a woman.

Since Pam had very little contact with her biological father and did not have an otherfather. I asked her, “So how do you think you will learn those things?” She replied,

I mean I think I always learn in reverse just not having a lot. I've learned from more of what I didn't have than what I do have, like so, I think I got those things from learning what not to do, what not to accept from a man just from what I've seen done.

Similar to Pam, women with non-residential fathers asserted that there were areas in life and womanhood that can only be learned from men. They felt that they were disadvantaged, and some, like Pam, described various ways that they attempted to make up for what they believed to be a gap in knowledge and exposure. They felt equipped to be warriors, or strong women. They described their mothers as examples of strength and how to persevere. Further, as I revealed in the “independence” section the women shared that they pursued independence in response to their fathers’ absence. Many employed Pam’s strategy of “learning in reverse.”

For the most part women with residential fathers extolled the benefits of their relationships with their fathers, However, some women shared that they learned how to express their womanhood by desiring an opposite relationship in the future than the interaction they witnessed between their fathers and other women.

Julia: Things that bother me, like my stepmother always bring him his plate. Or sometimes I'll be over there and he be like, “Bring my plate down.” I'm like, grown-assed man. I need you to get up and go fix you a plate. My ideals that like I am not going marry nobody who think I'm going serve them because they will just be SOL.

Asia: His wife is Filipino and he has this thing that African American black woman are like crazy. He loves them and everything. But he feels like they have this type of attitude and disposition about themselves different from other cultures of women in America. And I always argue with him.

MJ: So how does he explain that, considering that he has black daughters?

Asia: We're different. Oh you guys were raised right and you guys are special. No, I always tell him that is not how that works. No one sees us different. You see us different because we're your daughters but we're not, you know what I'm saying. So you just have to open your mind. He actually kind of He raised us one way and the type of woman that he maybe prefer might be different than actually the way he raised us. I always say I'm staying true to myself and I always I don't take anything anyone says for face value right away. I always think about, even him. Especially that I'm older. You know, when you're little your dad said something, okay, just go with it. I think about what he said and I'm like no that's not right. And I try to live actually a way to prove to him that it's not.

Asia thought her father invokes stereotypes of Black women as emasculating and domineering. Unlike women with non-residential fathers who said they learned about how their fathers thought of women by observing how many partners he may have had or how he treated their mothers, Asia shared an example of witnessing her father's support of dominant feminine roles. Further, she worked against them for her personal definition and to convince him to redefine his own. Her interpretation of her father's gender perspective was an iterative process by which she reflected on her perceptions of his behavior and sought to convince him to change his views and actions.

Searching for Daddy

The women asserted that fathers give male perspectives on the world and femininity. Many women, particularly those from two-parent households reasoned that

the consequence of having an uninvolved biological father or at least a father figure was for women to always be “searching for daddy.” For instance, Asia said:

I definitely feel like especially in the African American community that to have a male figure in your life is like a big deal. It's almost like if you don't have it, you search for it and you search for it a lot of ways when you get older and I have a lot of friends who date just live with their mother, they didn't have dads, and they look for that attention, just approval and they want this male attention. I never had that. I never looked for it.

The women argued that women without father figures seek male love in the arms of romantic partners, make reckless decisions, and in other cases become “too independent” and emasculating. In theorizing about women like themselves, some women with supportive fathers shared that their father’s admonishing helped them to be sexually independent. These women shared that they “know their worth” and were not in unhealthy dating relationships.

Women from single-mother-headed households had similar views to women from two-parent households about needing a male perspective to handle dating situations. They felt that it is difficult but not impossible to come of age without it. Tamara explained her sexual coming of age without having her father in her life in the following manner:

As a strong individual in high school, I was strong in my mind, you know, toward my goals and everything but I was still lacking in the knowledge of knowing about sexual encounters and like, you know, all those other things that are going through my mind and my head at the same time during that age, especially during puberty.

Some women with otherfathers requested their support for intimate relationships. Tanya shared that she thought uninvolved fathers leave a “void” in their children’s lives:

I feel like there's still some type of void, even if you don't want to acknowledge it or whatnot. I feel like there is just something that only

a father can provide that a mother can't provide or a grandmother can't provide.

Tanya went on to describe the importance of her community otherfather, her pastor, for her development within intimate relationships:

I didn't have a father figure growing (up). I think there is something that I missed out. I guess like because I'm getting it now, so I'm learning it now. And I see how it would have been useful if I learned it sooner.

MJ: Like what?

Tanya: Like how it is when it comes to guys. Like maybe I wouldn't have made that mistake.

The “mistake” that Tanya referred to involved her first sexual relationship from which she contracted a sexually transmitted disease. In other portions of the interview, Tanya shared that she felt misguided and unprepared for her first romantic relationship. She later asserted that she would not have had such a negative dating experience if she had her otherfather in her life at the time. Tanya’s experience points to the critical role otherfathers can play in the lives of women with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers.

Some women, like Mary feared that their lack of relationship with their biological father and their experience growing up in a single-mother headed household made them too aggressive.

Mary: I think a woman that knows how to stay in her place and be supportive of her man that is a sign of a strong woman. Because I know growing up in a single-parent household, I would say the one thing that I do lack is that in a lot of ways. My friends, especially my guy friends, they always tell me that I tend to be too independent. Like I'm the type of woman where if a guy tries to open a door for me like I walk through the door first and they're like, “Mary you touch

that door and watch what happens.” Or you know I just try to be Little Miss Independent.

Mary’s comment invokes the controlling images discussed in this chapter. She incorporated the notions of the “lady” within her definition of “strong woman” and revealed her support for the warrior and lady balance. She also described that her friends, particularly male friends, thought she was “too independent.” Mary attributed what she believed to be excessive independence to growing-up in a single-mother headed household. She described herself as at a deficit or “lack” because she did not respond in traditional ways to gendered social norms. Mary is not alone in her assertion. Many women who grew-up in single-mother-headed households feared that they were “too independent” or would be seen by others as too aggressive.

Daughter-father relationships have implications for how daughters believe others view their capabilities to perform gender roles and how they see themselves. Additionally, the women assign positive value to the (racialized) gender socialization of biological and otherfathers.

Discussion

This chapter builds on previous studies of paternal gender socialization and daughters’ psycho-social outcomes. The women believed their fathers contributed to their ability to achieve a balance between independent and lady-like behavior. They argued that without father influence women become imbalanced, and are often overly aggressive and emasculating.

The narratives of women with supportive, residential fathers highlighted fathers who took their daughters on date nights, played sports with them, and encouraged them to

pursue higher education. Their descriptions push the boundaries of what is publically available about Black fatherhood and emphasize positive interactions that occur between engaged fathers and their daughters. With so much research emphasis on non-residential fathers we have limited information on how residential fathers help women and girls enact or dismantle dominant gendered expectations.

While the daughters' reports of supportive residential fathers' behaviors point to some interesting and under-researched aspects of Black father involvement, the deeper, more analytical contribution of this analysis is the relationship between paternal residence and how the women described their desire to enact controlling images of Black womanhood.

The narratives of women with supportive residential fathers revealed an attachment to dominant father and feminine images as well as a sentiment that they are able to achieve dominant expectations because of their relationships with their fathers. The women shared that their fathers encouraged their independence, offered a male perspective on how to interact with men, and offered to protect them from men who were poor partners. They argued that their fathers contributed to their sense of self-sufficiency, academic achievement, and ability to make good dating decisions. Their assertions do not seem too far-fetched in light of work by Anderson (1989) and Kaplan (1997) which find that fathers offer status and protection to girls and teens. Hill (2004) argues that these status protections are effective because of the value that society places on male-centered households.

Women from single parent households discussed achieving in spite of their experiences with their fathers. These women said they worked to be academically

successful so that they could be financially independent and avoid dependence on disengaged men like their fathers. They felt that academic success and independence were characteristics that they could achieve on their own, and that their mothers modeled strength for them. In contrast, they felt their fathers' uninvolvement hindered their interpersonal relationship skills within romantic relationships. They argued that there is something about having a male present in the household and seeing him interact in positive ways with women that communicates to daughters how to engage in intimate relationships. Since they did not experience this they felt that they were at a loss. Some sought father figures or male role models to teach them the "male perspective", some felt at a loss, and others decided they would have to figure out how to engage in long-lasting, loving relationships with men on their own.

Interestingly, both women with residential and non-residential fathers argued that women who grow up without their biological fathers or father figures search for male love and approval in intimate relationships or develop abrasive interactions styles that turn off men. I use Asia's phrase "searching for daddy" to describe their sentiment. A significant part of their reasoning was that women with fathers learn how to be ladies within intimate relationships. They argued that women with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers are unfulfilled because of their fathers' lack of involvement and that they search for male attention within intimate relationships.

The women's narratives revealed that they believed fathers are critical in their expressions of Black femininity, particularly when it comes to performing desirable behavior within intimate romantic relationships. This is important information for researchers who study Black teens and adult women's dating habits, as their orientations

toward dating may differ. This is particularly relevant for policy makers and social workers who are concerned with Black girls' sexual behaviors and dating habits given Black girls' disproportionately high rates of sexually transmitted diseases (Centers for Disease Control, 2008).

From a theoretical standpoint these results are important for understanding the multiple ways that Black gender ideologies are transmitted and absorbed within family relationships. Not only did the women support controlling images of Black womanhood, they also looked to their relationships with their fathers for tools to enact these roles. At times when their fathers were unavailable they used tropes of the warrior (strength) narrative to describe their femininity. As a result, controlling images were weaved in complex manners within daughter-father relationships. In *Black Sexual Politics*, Collins called for a dismantling of Black controlling images. Any efforts to alter Black controlling images must take into account the intricate ways by which women desire and rely on controlling images to achieve social status and make sense of their status within the daughter-father relationship.

Chapter 7

GETTING TO THE REAL:

Forgiveness Narratives of Daughters with Intermittent/Uninvolved Fathers

I feel like he needs to own it. Like I don't want to badger him and tell him stuff that he already knows I'm sure he knows. But I feel like when he's in those processes of lying to his self that's blocking his growth in a way. And so if he was just to accept that and own it, then we would be able to move forward and the front wouldn't be a front, it would be something real and authentic.

At the time of our interview, Shelli had just experienced two visits with her father. Those visits were their first time seeing each other in over four years. She was excited by their interaction, but troubled that her father did not address his absence from her life. Shelli felt his actions prohibited them from having a “real and authentic” relationship. As a follow-up question I asked Shelli if she would ever tell her father what she told me. She responded:

Of course. I think that only comes with time and exposure to each other. After a while all the fluff and sugar has to come off and you have to show the real at one point.

All of the women in my study with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers discussed and grappled with how or if they should pursue adult relationships with their fathers. They contemplated whether or not they wanted to maintain intermittent

exchanges or reach out after long periods of no contact. Similar to Shelli, most of the women shared that they wanted their fathers to apologize and admit their wrongs. They felt that an apology and behavior changes were necessary to have “real and authentic” interactions.

The problem for most of the women was that they were still in the “fluff” stage. Their interactions with their fathers were short and infrequent and presented little opportunity for them have “time and exposure to each other” to express their true feelings. Consequently, many women were tired of the little-to-no contact they had with their fathers. They longed for their fathers to “show the real,” but felt they had to settle for making sense of the relationship internally.

This chapter is an exploration of the strategies the women with intermittent/uninvolved fathers pursued to get “the real.” Kaplan (1997) described these absences as father loss. According to Kaplan, the term “father absence” fails to encapsulate the emotional turmoil and deprivation daughters of emotionally distant or uninvolved fathers feel. Conditional forgiveness and reconciliation are difficult to pursue within a relationship in which the offending acts continue, and the daughters are skeptical of fathers’ promises to discontinue offensive behavior. Fathers of the women in my study were in and out of their lives, creating periods of time when the women were unsure of their fathers’ location or the reason for their absence. In many instances, they were left to create resolution narratives or assemble some meaning of their daughter-father relationships without significant interaction or reconciliation with their fathers; others attempted forgiveness as their fathers tried to fashion stronger bonds.

Their discussions of elements of forgiveness and reconciliation reveal the emotional and interpersonal work they pursued or considered as they contemplated a relationship with their father. Further, these narratives reveal that the women were not passive actors within the relationship. They saw themselves as having options about how (not) to pursue relationships with their fathers. While none expressed aspects of fully forgiving or reconciling, the principles of forgiveness and reconciliation offer a frame for understanding the agency of the women in this study.

Research studies of forgiveness within family relationships often employ psychological or clinical approaches and deal with emotive dynamics. I am more interested in a sociological approach which explores group capacities to take control of a particular situation. In the instance of these intermittent and uninvolved daughter-father relationships forgiveness becomes a powerful form of expression.

My initial interview protocol did not include a question about forgiveness or reconciliation. However, after performing my first set of interviews, it became apparent women in my study were grappling with issues surrounding reconnection with their fathers. Reconnection usually emerged within the interviews when I asked the women to tell me about the quality of their relationship with their fathers. Consequently, I added the question, “Are you open to reconnecting w/ your father?” to my follow-up interview protocol. In most cases, I never asked the question because women either brought up the topic on their own or discussed issues related to reconnecting with their fathers when I asked them to describe the quality of their relationships with their fathers. Many said that our interviews were the first time they had voiced their feelings and emotions regarding their disconnected daughter-father relationships. They wondered how to respond to their

fathers' attempt to reemerge in their lives. Other women wondered whether they were ready or desired to contact their fathers on their own.

In this chapter, I focus on the 17 women with intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers. Of those women eleven shared that their fathers had contacted them within the year prior to our interview and said that they wanted to keep in touch (they often made the overtures around holidays or birthdays) and six women shared that they had not had any contact with their father in at least a couple of years. Among the 11 women who had recent contact with their fathers 9 of these women shared that their fathers contacted them again after their recent promise to contact them more frequently. The women shared that their fathers contacted them sooner than they usually would, but that there was still a period of months between the contacts, and that they were suspicious of their father's sincerity. The other two women shared that their fathers contacted them within a year of our interview but did not follow-up with them after that contact. Three women (Lexi, Nakia, and Tamara) brought up the word forgiveness on their own. Seven women (Abigail, Beth, Mary, Shelli, Summer, Veronica, and Zoey) brought up reconciliation and forgiveness early in their interview without me asking about it. I asked the other seven women (Alexandria, Denise, Lauren, Keisha, Naomi, Pam, and Tanya) if they were open to reconnecting or maintaining relationships with their fathers. Whether the women or I brought up the topic each woman spoke at length about what they felt they would need to have a close adult relationship with their fathers.

Forgiveness Narratives

I begin this chapter with a look at forgiveness, the nexus for reconciliation. I look at the concepts of unconditional and conditional forgiveness. In particular, I focus on how

the women in my study discuss forgiveness and their strategies for pursuing forgiveness within their daughter-father relationships. Using the women's testimony, I then look at the traditional concept of reconciliation provided by Krause and Ellison (2003). I explore why reconciliation cannot be neatly applied to the daughter-father relationships discussed in my study.

Researchers often separate forgiveness into two major categories: unconditional and conditional (based on acts of contrition). Enright and North (1994) define forgiveness "as a willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the underserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her (47)." However, forgiveness is rarely so clear cut. As Wuthernow writes, forgiveness has "fuzzy edges." The women in this study discussed aspects of forgiveness; however, they discussed it from the vantage point of aspects they had control over, which was whether or not they accepted their fathers acts of contrition and how they intra-personally resolved the disconnect if their fathers failed to make amends.

Unconditional forgiveness, often referred to as the "Christian Model," is "based upon the belief that people should forgive as God does—unconditionally—requiring neither compensation nor a promise to avoid repeating in the future (Krause & Ellison, 80)." Overall, the three women (Tamara, Summer, and Alexandra) in my study who subscribe to unconditional forgiveness stated that they accept their fathers the way they were and work towards the best relationship they can have. Unconditional forgiveness served as a bridge the divide between their *desire* for a stronger relationship and the

reality of their disengaged relationships with their fathers. They differed in their reasons for taking this perspective.

Tanya described her unresolved feelings about her relationship with her father as a burden that forgiveness helped her manage or bear. She explained it this way: “I don't know if he goes to church or what not but I mean I forgave him. I can't hold grudges, that's a sin and then put stress and it puts burdens on your soul. I can't take that.” Tamara asserted that she forgave her father for own her mental and spiritual wellbeing. She divorced forgiveness from her father's acts of repentance and focused on the aspect of the relationship over which she had control.

Summer explained her perspective in the following manner:

When he's around, it's good. I've kind of learned to just take the good for the good and the bad for the bad and kind of count my blessings, so every time I see him it's a blessing, even though he's been crazy my whole life, I can't change that...You know who he is. It's not like you can change it. And that's what keeps things level, knowing that nobody's perfect. God didn't want for me to have super dad. There's a reason why we're family.

Summer acknowledged her father's “good” and “bad” behavior and said she “can't change that.” However, she does have the ability to change and decide how she deals with her father's actions. She chose to accept him as he was. To further prove her point that she needed to accept his behavior she said, “God didn't want for me to have super dad.”

Women who supported unconditional forgiveness chose not to discuss their feelings directly with their fathers. This demonstrates that the women believed they could assign significance to the relationship separate of any action or reaction of their fathers.

The women limited themselves to internal reconciliation and meaning making of the relationship, instead of working at reconciliation with their fathers through conversation and interaction.

Frankel (1998) finds that acts of contrition involve the following process on the part of their perpetrator: “1) must be aware of wrongdoing, 2) express remorse, 3) make a resolution not to repeat the offense, and 4) make restitution.” This process assures victims that they will not be victimized again. The women in my study who favored acts of contrition wanted assurance that their fathers would not continue to behave in ways that hurt them.

Thirteen women shared that their forgiveness hinged on their fathers’ acts of contrition. They felt that they could not forgive their fathers without proper acknowledgement of what they believed to be paternal neglect and mistreatment.

Some respondents, like Nakia, felt that their fathers’ apologies for past actions and cessation of hurtful interactions encouraged them to forgive their fathers. Nakia felt that her father's behavior changes and her realization that he loved and cared about her made it easier for her to forgive him. She stated:

Yeah I forgave him. You know, I got over it. I realized that, you know, regardless of if he missed that event-I think that the one thing that I thought was that he really didn't care about me, like he didn't love me like Oh my God he doesn't love me. He should have been there or whatever. And like I guess I realize that he really does care and he really does love me. And I think that's what's made me like forgive him like for everything kind of in a way, because I see that he really does like care about me even if he doesn't— hasn't like shown it or whatever, at all times and hasn't been there at all times, he really does care.

For Nakia, her father’s apology affirmed her. It showed her that he cared about her accomplishments and well-being. It smoothed over her feelings of being unloved.

However, other women who said their fathers had not apologized or increased their involvement in their lives found it difficult to forgive them. Their fathers' lack of engagement (emotional, financial, and contact) signaled to them that they were unrepentant. Whereas the other women were hopeful for a change in their fathers' behaviors, Beth, Zoe, Pam, Lexi, and Tanya, the only women in my study who explicitly stated that they were angry with their fathers, were not looking to forgive their fathers anytime in the near future..

They felt it was unnecessary to forgive an unrepentant and unchanging father. For instance, Lexi fumed:

I feel like anybody who treat me wrong is a bad person, like a bad family member. Like, I'm not going hate one person over one thing, only if it's continuous, you know what I'm saying? But that's how kind of it [her relationship with her father] is.

Lexi went on to describe an argument she had with her father around Christmas in which she cursed at him. She used this as an example of her letting her father know that she would not stand for his inconsistent behavior. For Lexi, continuous disregard was unforgivable.

Like Lexi, Keisha expressed difficulty forgiving her father. She felt he "kind of just blew [her] to the side" in favor of her brother. Keisha said she forgave her father for past grievances related to his alcohol abuse because she believed his alcohol related behavior were beyond his control. However, she felt she could not completely forgive him because of his favoritism for her brother had nothing to do with his substance abuse and extended into his life of sobriety.

Tanya, one of my most religious participants who travelled over 40 minutes each Sunday to attend church service and activities, such as choir practice, took a harsher

stance. She said that she did not think she could accept her father back in her life.

However, it is important to note that Tanya could not remember her biological father and had not seen or heard from him since she was three months old. Therefore, she is unlike most other respondents in the study who had some memory of interactions with their fathers.

Some women stated their fathers' efforts to build more engaged relationships and interact with them made it easier to forgive them. On the other hand, some respondents found it difficult or impossible to forgive or reconcile with their fathers because they felt their fathers continued to be disinterested and uninvolved. In these instances, women did not talk about unconditional forgiveness or divine spiritual plans; instead they emphasized acts of contrition.

Reconciliation occurs when the two parties involved interact and agree to come to terms with previous transgressions, and the transgressor agrees to discontinue violations (Krause & Ellison, 2003). The reconciliation model is generally applied to relationships that were fractured by specific events, not continuous patterns as I observed. For many women in this chapter their relationship remained in the “fluff” stage where they did not discuss their grievances with their fathers. Only four out of the 17 women I discuss in this chapter had ever told their fathers their true feelings. In fact, none of the women had experienced interpersonal reconciliation with their fathers. Instead, they seemed to seek internal resolution and reconciliation. Their decisions regarding forgiveness were their ways of making sense of the current and future state of their daughter-father relationships.

Discussion

The women used forgiveness as personal (prescriptive) strategies. For women who chose unconditional forgiveness it was an opportunity to divorce the status of their daughter-father relationships from any of their fathers' acts. Instead they asserted themselves as actors and accepted their fathers as they are. However, they failed to express their feelings *to* their fathers, friends, or family. Women who supported conditional forgiveness of their fathers expressed their discontent *to* their fathers, friends or family and asserted their power within the relationship by deciding not to forgive repeated transgressions.

The women decided how (not) to pursue relationships with their fathers and grappled with how to embody the principle of forgiveness, particularly in the face or absence of opportunities to build engaged relationships with their fathers. Their pointed reflections on forgiveness and reconciliation demonstrate that it is important to explore how broken family relationships can be mended. Further they reveals a strategy the women use to give themselves power and agency within difficult family interactions. While most of the women were silent or did not express their feelings directly to their fathers, they constructed forgiveness narratives, contemplated reconciliation, and described their adult relationships with fathers as interactions with which they have some measure of control.

My abovementioned findings contribute not only to our understanding of disconnected daughter-father relationships, but also to our knowledge of how Black women use cultural influences to assist them to navigate family roles and relationships. I find that the women identified several key aspects of forgiveness and reconciliation. A

few viewed forgiveness as an unconditional act divorced of any action by their fathers, linking forgiveness to their spiritual and emotional health and development. Other respondents refused to forgive their fathers until they perceived a change in their behavior, and others only conceived of forgiving their fathers because their fathers reached out to them by way of phone calls, visits, and extending explanations of the past.

In this chapter, I push the boundaries of what we know about how African American daughters make sense of family relationships. While public dialogue and media have explored the emotional and spiritual implications of father loss for daughters (Armstead, 2010; Barras 2002; Kaplan, 1997; Robinson 2004; Nielson 2008), few social science studies have examined the emotion work of the women in daughter-father relationships (Nielson 2008). I highlight how Black women rely on forgiveness and reconciliation to assist with deconstructing and navigating father loss.

They use forgiveness and reconciliation as a strategy to make sense of their adult and future relationships with their fathers. This is not the only strategy, but certainly one that emerged within their narratives and on which they place salience.

This chapter is the beginning of a research conversation about how women with a common experience of having intermittent/uninvolved fathers employ similar strategies to gain control and to protect themselves within their daughter-father relationships. Future studies should explore in more depth how the women define and conceptualize forgiveness and how they employ forgiveness and reconciliation over their life course as they build or disconnect from relationships with their fathers.

Chapter 8

BEYOND SUPER AND DEADBEAT DAD:

Articulating a Vision for Responsible Fathering

To be a good father is the most important job in a man's life, but it doesn't have to be hard. Play catch, go to a park or visit a zoo. Help your child with their homework. Sit down together for dinner. Ask them how their day was. Things get busy, and sometimes we all fall short, but the smallest moments can have the biggest impact on a child's life. Take time to be a dad today. (President Obama)

The women in my study would agree with President Obama's assertions. When describing their relationships with their fathers, most women with supportive residential fathers had so many small moments with their fathers they had difficulty pinpointing their most positive memories of their fathers. Their interviews illuminated relationships that were nurturing, consistent, and reflective of President Obama's statements. But too often, economic, societal, and interpersonal factors serve as prohibitive barriers to positive African American daughter-father relationships.

As the women shared in their interviews, and previous studies have found, Black fathers face several barriers to fatherhood within and outside of their family contexts. (Bowman, 1990; Bowman & Sanders, 1998; Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Cochran, 1997; Danziger & Radin, 1990; Johnson, 2000; Young 2004). Unemployment, which is disproportionately higher for Black males, can make it difficult for fathers to provide

basic necessities (such as food and shelter) to pay for recreational activities or gifts, or to engage children in routine activities from which enduring, father-child experiences can occur. Divorce and other forms of relational separation can lead to adversarial relationships between fathers and their children's mothers. The conflict that may arise between the parents can interfere with providing consistent interaction with children. The women in my study articulated these various challenges faced by Black fathers. Nevertheless, they believed fathers were important to their expressions of Black femininity and lamented their fathers' absence.

From the women's discussions of their fathers, we learn that regular, cumulative involvement is important if fathers want close relationships with their daughters. In essence, fathers have to "take time to be a dad today," tomorrow, the next day, and for the rest of their lives. As the Obama Administration's agenda continues to emphasize fatherhood programs, the programs must not be developed separately from economic and human services programs. Economic barriers and paternal involvement are intertwined, and when promoting fatherhood, policy agendas must be developed with that context in mind. Federal agencies under the Obama administration have already recognized the intertwining of sociological and economic influences. The Obama administration is proposing a "holistic planning" approach to fatherhood policies. The Fatherhood, Marriage and Families Innovation Fund press release reads,

[It] will scale up effective fatherhood and family-strengthening programs across the country. And recognizing that the best leg up for any family is a good job, the President has also provided funding through the Department of Labor for transitional jobs programs for noncustodial parents facing barriers to employment (Office of the Press Secretary, 2010).

More discussion of this program and recommendations for this proposed program are provided later.

Impact of Results of Study

This study positioned daughters as meaning makers and agentic within the daughter-father relationship. Reflecting on the overall crisis of Black fathers, and fatherhood in general, the women recognized and understood the differences in their experiences from dominant fathering. Although recent studies have found that parents' gender matters less for child outcomes (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010), the women's dialogues about fathers and their influence on their lives reveal that these women assign cultural value to the father role. This practice reflects a recognized narrative within Black culture that places an importance on fatherhood (Bowman, 1990; Coles & Green, 2010). Nevertheless, their support of the dominant roles does not represent an uncritical endorsement. Instead, the support represents the narrative work the women attempted to perform to explain their situations and experiences as compared to other father-child relationships they are aware of within the broader cultural context.

The women demonstrated that they thought about dominant notions of fatherhood and the particularities of Black fatherhood as they assigned meaning to the family role and contemplated their experiences with their fathers. This is an important finding for the sociology of family studies because very few studies have attempted to understand how African American daughters think about family roles and experiences, particularly Black women who are young adults and childfree. Our analytical lens is usually focused on poor teen or young adult mothers. Consequently, what we may attribute to Black women's thoughts regarding Black men and fathers is skewed towards the particular

financial and emotional relationships of women living on the margins in terms of economic stability, social roles, and expectations around family formation.

Studies of young, Black women in fragile families and relationships find that they value marriage and father roles (Edin & Kefalas 2006; Kaplan, 1997; Waller 2002).

Policy analysts and policymakers often use the findings to demonstrate that low-income women are not socially deviant, but support mainstream values. However, my emphasis is on young Black women *from* fragile families, who by virtue of their education may not embark on future fragile family relationships of their own. Unlike many studies of fragile family arrangements, I do not focus on the mismatch between what people do within their personal relationships and what they expect or aspire to have. For my study, the more analytically useful move is to consider how women draw on these dominant role expectations to make meaning of the relationships they have and to assign agency to themselves within the relationships. Cultural scripts become interpretative frames for them to discuss and contextualize their experiences and to contemplate their spaces and opportunities within society. This study contributes to the work of scholars and policy analysts who are concerned about the transition to adulthood for young women from these families. Further, the narratives of the women in my study add to our knowledge regarding the paternal involvement of Black men whose employment and class status are somewhat tenuous.

Whether or not the women were exposed to dominant father roles, they, for the most part, thought fathers should provide financially and live in the same households as their children. Women with non-residential fathers expressed various ways that fathers

can provide for their daughters when they live in separate households; however their orientation was still toward their fathers fulfilling financial responsibilities.

Women with intermittent/uninvolved fathers felt the crisis of Black fatherhood in a very real and personal sense. Most women in the study felt that Black fathers faced barriers to involvement; women with intermittent/uninvolved fathers experienced the consequences of their fathers' uninvolved and, at times, tenuous connections to the labor market. Additionally, they felt that their fathers' uninvolved hampered their ability to engage in loving, heterosexual relationships and made it difficult for them to enact balanced representations of Black womanhood.

While women with intermittent/uninvolved fathers personally experienced reverberations of the Black father crisis, women with supportive, residential fathers experienced what some would argue as the counter-representation of the crisis of the Black father. These women described their fathers as important for how they made sense of themselves. The experiences of women with supportive fathers, particularly those with residential fathers, demonstrate that there are Black fathers who support their daughters, contribute to their financial, emotional, and physical well-being, and who are consistent figures in their lives. Given mainstream conceptualizations of Black fatherhood, this is an important contribution and an essential statement about Black fathers. In addition, the research tradition on Black fathers has done enough to examine the contributions of responsible, engaged Black fathers (Bowman, 1990; Coles & Green, 2010; Hamer, 2001).

In addition to discussing traditionally dominant roles of fathers as providers and living in the same household, the women discussed care-giving and nurturing as important aspects of fathering. At times they identified these roles as more important than

providing and living in the same household. In fact, women from non-residential households identified care-giving and nurturing as a bridge over troubled financial waters or over the inability of their fathers to live in the same household. For them, a father who offered emotional support and chose to be engaged in their children's lives in lieu of financial support and household presence could still be a good father. They shared other examples of paternal involvement which deviated from mainstream expectations of Black fatherhood. For instance, their descriptions of otherfathers demonstrate that Black men father children other than their biological children. Further, their narratives illuminate that Black men occupy various roles within blood and unrelated kinship systems, such as community fathers, grandfathers, and uncles, just to name a few.

Women with intermittent/uninvolved fathers spoke at length about the role of reconciliation within family relationships. They addressed the conditions under which reconciliation could occur or if reconciliation could ever occur. They discussed anecdotally how social institutions like religion played a role in reconciliation. The narratives demonstrate that disconnected daughter-father relationships are not easy to mend, and that children are active and thoughtful actors within the relationships. This work also demonstrates that even when fathers and daughters have distant relationships there are opportunities for stronger relationships to develop. Nielson (2008) argues that daughter-father relationships grow more distant over time, and that fathers and daughters must work to repair those relationships. The narratives of the women in my study reveal that for the most part daughters would like to have close relationships with their fathers. In addition, they are willing to pursue these relationships, even after contested interactions, particularly when fathers apologize for previous hurtful acts. My

descriptions of reconciliation between intermittent/uninvolved non-residential fathers and their daughters show that daughters do not passively experience their relationship with their fathers.

This study is also one of few studies to explore gender relationships within Black family relationships. Daughters recalled the ways that their fathers socialized them into controlling images of Black femininity. They emphasized the importance of having access to biological fathers or father figures. When the women contemplated their expressions of Black femininity or their father loss, they discussed their social value or abilities within the context of having access to a socially valued figure, the father. When the women did not have access to their fathers, they calculated deficits in their ability to perform dominant feminine roles.

The narratives of the women in my study reveal that they were not looking for perfect fathers; they just did not want uninvolved fathers. They preferred resident fathers, but believe good fathering could occur in a non-residential context. They desired for fathers to be primary financial supporters, but communicated that many Black fathers face unemployment issues. While the women understood many of challenges and difficulties associated with Black fathering, they also emphasized that it is important for fathers to take responsibility.

Recall Keisha's assertions about stereotypes and realities of Black fatherhood, which I discussed in the introduction. Her statements reveal the complicated nature of the women's experiences with the controlling images of Black fatherhood and their actual experiences. They performed complex narrative work to describe their general views and their specific experiences within daughter-father relationships. Keisha's statement also

highlights the difficulty in discussing and creating policies regarding the crisis of the Black father. How do you address the social issue of fathers who are disconnected from their children at higher rates than other groups? How do you assign societal or cultural meaning to the types of fathering they pursue, such as bundling, while also acknowledging the father loss some children may feel and the psychosocial outcomes that are related to decreased father involvement? In the following section I describe social welfare programs which attempt to increase “responsible” fathering. I discuss the implications of my research for the programs.

Responsible Fatherhood and Federal policy

Over the past decade there has been increased policy focus on the role of fathers in family systems. President Clinton’s administration and the 104th Congress included fathers in their conversations about welfare reform. While their fatherhood legislation was never approved by the full Congress, the Temporary Aid to Needy Families Act (TANF) included a directive for states to increase their child support collection efforts (Boggess, 2010). President Bush’s administration increased efforts to include fathers in social welfare policy, with the focus on fatherhood shifting from the procurement of child support to the promotion of marriage and family relationships. The 2005 Deficit Reduction Act included legislation that “established a five-year, \$150 million per year grant program for Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood. Of this amount, Congress provided for the allocation of up to \$50 million per year for Responsible Fatherhood programs (Hansell, 2010).” As part of this funding package, in 2006 the Administration for Children and Families awarded over 100 five-year grants to organizations (both public and private) that focused on fatherhood programming. The

majority of these programs focused on parenting skills (Hansell, 2010). Evaluations of some of the funded programs find that they were not effective in improving paternal involvement or marital relationships. However, some African American couples experienced more relationship satisfaction after attending the programs (Hansell, 2010). Researchers and policy-makers attribute the failed results of the programs to their over-emphasis on relationship-skills and lack of focus on employment issues which plague fragile families.

As stated earlier in this chapter, President Obama is continuing the trend to include fathers in social welfare programming. Building on his track record as a United States Senator where he co-sponsored the “Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2007,” as President he has promoted—through his speeches, writings, and acts of policy—the inclusion of fathers in family life. His most recent intervention in this area was the proposed Fatherhood, Family, and Marriage Innovation Fund for the 2011 fiscal year budget. The plan calls for 500 million dollars to fund “comprehensive” service programs to promote responsible fatherhood. The proposed programs:

would include such services as: peer support; relationship skill-building (which can include marriage education); co-parenting services; conflict resolution; child support case management; job training and other employment services; employment preparation services; training subsidies; financial incentives; earning supplements; legal services; substance abuse and mental health treatment (typically, through partnerships with public agencies and community-based providers); linkages to domestic violence prevention programs; and linkages to public agencies and community-based providers offering housing assistance, benefits enrollment, and other services (Hansell, 2010).

These proposed program and intervention areas cover issues that researchers and family advocates have highlighted as important service areas (Mincy & Huang 2002). Moreover,

some of the topic areas address concerns the women in my study raised about fathers when they identified child support and substance abuse as barriers to paternal involvement.

Perhaps the most important invention concerning relationship skills is co-parenting services. Co-parenting is an important approach to understanding the possibilities of non-residential Black father involvement (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Carlson, McLanahan, Brooks-Gunn, 2008). Co-parenting occurs when two parents jointly assume responsibility for their children. A focus on co-parenting is meaningful because co-parenting skills are useful within married, co-habiting, and dissolved relationships. By focusing on *parenting* rather than marriage, programs would create spaces for mothers and fathers to consider and decide what strategies work best for continuous paternal engagement without relying on the parents' romantic involvement. This is critical considering the prevalence of multi-partner fertility. Recall the women in my study discussing the challenges their fathers' various parent-child relationships presented in their own relationships. Co-parenting skill development could address some of these concerns. Additionally, within a societal context in which fatherhood and marriage often do not occur simultaneously it is important for social policy programs to articulate a realistic vision of fathering that operates independently of marriage and male-centered households (Carlson, McLanahan, Brooks-Gunn, 2008).

In addition, women in my study highlighted nurturing and otherfathers as important characteristics of fatherhood. Hence, any responsible fatherhood policies and programming support should encourage the development of nurturing, caring fatherhood. In addition, some of the women relayed that they recruited otherfathers through

interactions with older male family members and friends. Policy-makers must take note of this extended familial relationship/organization. When designing programs or promoting programs, policy makers and program designers should consider the significance of otherfathers to children's life experiences. This data is crucial for crafting policies that promote positive daughter-father relationships and that are effective in addressing socio-emotional outcomes. Additionally, the presence of otherfathers within the African American community highlights that there are groups of men who practice supportive, responsible fathering who could be valuable mentors and community-level resources for programs. Culturally responsive programs must consider the multiple ways fathering occurs within the African American community, as many families incorporate extended kin to fulfill family needs and contribute to children's well-being.

Finally, any program which seeks to connect fathers with their children must seriously contend with the issue of reconciliation. In Chapter 7, I discussed the women's various understandings and approaches to forgiveness and reconciliation. All of the women preferred for their fathers to apologize and change behaviors the daughters found inconsistent and offensive. Community programs and policies that address paternal relationship skills must include workshops and discussions to help fathers and their children reconcile before any other acts of engagement will be taken seriously by the children.

This study is one of few sociological studies to consider daughter-father relationships. The women illuminated the various ways they viewed themselves and their fathers in light of controlling images of dominant and Black fatherhood. They exposed complexities and contradictions as part of the internal and external challenges of the

daughter-father relationship. Between these challenges and possibilities lie the spaces for new descriptions, definitions, re-conceptualizations, and manifestations of Black fatherhood that extend beyond the super and deadbeat dad dichotomy. Further, redefinitions will provide opportunities for the women to imagine expanded possibilities for their feminine expression and agentic responses within the daughter role.

Appendices

Appendix A: Pre-screening Contact

Number of Respondents (n=264)	Type of Contact		
	Email Only	Phone Only	Prescreened
	51	26	187

APPENDIX B: Sample Demographics

	SINGLE- MOTHER-HEADED HOUSEHOLD	TWO-PARENT HOUSEHOLD
Average Age	21	20
Religion/Denomination		
Protestant (33)	19	15
Catholic (2)	1	1
Non-denominational (1)	0	1
Agnostic (1)	0	1
Spiritual (2)	0	1
Other (1)	0	1
Total	20	20
Major		
Arts and Humanities (8)	2	6
Science/math/Engineering (9)	6	3
Social/Behavioral Science (17)	12	6
Professional Studies (3)	0	3
Undecided (2)	0	2
Total	20	20
Mother's Highest level of education		
Less than High School	1	1
High School	4	6
Some College	12	8
College	1	3
Post-graduate	2	2
Total	20	20
Father's Highest level of education		
Less than High School	0	2
High School	7	9
Some College	9	5
College	1	3
Post-graduate	0	1
Don't Know	3	0
Total	20	20

	SINGLE- MOTHER-HEADED HOUSEHOLD	TWO- PARENT HOUSEHOLD
Mother's Occupation		
Real estate (1)	0	1
Odd jobs (3)	3	0
Retail (2)	2	0
Office (9)	6	4
Education (5)	2	3
Trade/Labor (3)	1	2
Healthcare (10)	4	6
Custodial (1)	0	1
Homemaker (2)	0	2
Technology/Computers (1)	1	0
Social Services	0	1
Food Service	1	0
Total	20	20
Father's Occupation		
Trade/Labor (19)	8	12
Military (2)	0	2
Law Enforcement (1)	0	1
Truck Driver (2)	0	2
Education (1)	1	0
Healthcare (0)	0	0
Retail (1)	0	1
Underground economy (2)	2	0
Minister (2)	0	2
Unemployed (1)	1	0
Food Service (1)	1	0
Government (0)	0	0
Technology/Computers (1)	1	0
Barber	1	0
Don't Know	5	
Total	20	20

Appendix C: Interviewee Background Information

Name	Age	Household Type	Paternal Involvement	Social Father	Class	Religious Identification
Abigail	21	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Alexandra	21	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Catholic
Asia	20	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Working Class	Not religious
Beth	22	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	No	Low Middle Class	Protestant
Brittany	20	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Brenda	21	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Claire	19	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	Yes; Community	Working Class	Protestant
Darlene	21	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Working Class	Protestant
Denise	20	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant

Devin	21	Two-parent	Distant/Uninvolved Residential	No	Working Class	Agnostic
Erin	21	Two-parent	Distant/Uninvolved Residential	No	Working Class	Protestant
Halle	19	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Jada	19	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Working Class	Protestant
Jean	20	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Julia	21	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Low Middle Class	Protestant
Kamilah	18	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Working Class	Muslim/Christian
Keisha	19	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Replacement	Working Class	Protestant
Lanette	20	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	No	Working Class	Protestant
Lauren	21	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Leida	20	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant

Lexi	19	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Mary	21	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Low Middle Class	Protestant
Melanie	21	Two-parent	Distant/Uninvolved Residential	Yes; Community	Low Middle Class	Protestant
Melissa		Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Working Class	Catholic
Nakia	19	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Naomi	20	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Replacement	Working Class	Protestant
Nia	21	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Working Class	Protestant
Olivia	21	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Pam	21	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	No	Working Class	Protestant
Ruth	21	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	Yes; Community	Working Class	Protestant
Sara	20	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Low Middle Class	Protestant
Shelli	22	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant

Stacey		Two-parent	Supportive Residential	No	Working Class	Protestant
Summer		Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Replacement	Working Class	Protestant
Tamara	21	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Tanya	20	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Community	Working Class	Protestant
Terri	18	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	Yes; Community	Working Class	Protestant
Veronica	18	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Protestant
Zemariah	21	Two-parent	Supportive Residential	Yes; Supplemental	Working Class	Catholic (child) Non-denominational (adult)
Zoey	19	Single-mother	Intermittent/Uninvolved Non-Residential	No	Working Class	Protestant

Appendix D: Pre-Screening Questions

Eligibility:

- 1) Are you enrolled as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan?
 - i. YES [eligible]
 - ii. NO [ineligible]
- 2) Do you identify as Black or African-American?
 - i. YES [eligible]
 - ii. NO [ineligible]
- 3) Are you between the ages of 18 and 23?
 - i. YES [eligible]
 - ii. NO [ineligible]
- 4) Gender? M F [only females are eligible]
- 5) Does your biological father identify as Black or African-American?
 - i. YES [eligible]
 - ii. NO [ineligible]
- 6) Does your biological mother identify as Black or African-American?
 - i. YES [eligible]
 - ii. NO [ineligible]
- 7) Did you live in same household as both of your biological parents for your entire childhood (until you graduated from high school)?
 - i. YES [ask question #8]
 - ii. NO [skip to question #10]
- 8) Were your parents married?
 - i. YES

ii. NO

9) Are your parents still married?

- i. YES [eligible]
- ii. NO [ineligible]

10) Did you live in different household from your biological father for your entire childhood (until you graduated from high school)?

- i. YES [eligible]
- ii. NO [ineligible]

11) What was your mother's primary job when you were growing up?

12) What kind of work did she do?

13) Was that a blue-collar or white collar-job?

14) How many years of schooling did she complete?

15) **[Only ask if respondent grew up in a two-parent household]** What was your father's primary job when you were growing up?

16) What kind of work did she do?

17) Was that a blue-collar or white collar-job?

18) How many years of schooling did he complete?

19) This project requires that I do two interviews. The follow-up interview will occur about a month after the first interview. Are you available to do both interviews?

Appendix E

BACKGROUND SURVEY

Fill answer the following questions as accurately as possible

1. Age	
2. Major	
3. Year in school	
4. Hometown (City, State)	
5. Please circle the category that best describes your academic performance in K-12.	A student A/B student B student C student other (please describe)
6. What type of extracurricular activities did you participate in prior to graduating from high school?	
7. Please circle the category that best describes your academic performance in college	A student A/B student B student C student other (please describe)
8. What type of extracurricular activities have you participated in, in college?	
9. What is your mother's highest level of education?	
10. What type of work did your mother do when you were growing up?	

11. What is your father's highest level of education?	
12. What type of work did your father do when you were growing up?	
13. Are your biological parents married?	Yes [Go to question #16] No [Go to question #14]
14. Were you biological parents EVER married?	Yes [Go to question #15] No [Go to question #15]
15. Briefly describe your parents' relationship.	
16. How often do you have contact with your mother?	
17. How often do you have contact with your father?	
18. Write the sex and age of each of your siblings and the parents that you share with each sibling.	
19. How did you find out about the study?	

Appendix F
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

ACADEMIC

What was school like for you as a child? Did you like school?

What do you think about your college experience? Academically? Socially?

How are you paying for college? Do you have any scholarships? Any loans? Do you get any help from your mother? From your father? From your college? Are you working to help pay for college?

Did you work last summer? Why? Did you go to school last summer? Why?

Do you own a car? How did you get it?

How do you think your mother has contributed to your progress as a student? What about your father?

FEELINGS ABOUT YOURSELF

What do you like about yourself? What are your strengths? Would you define yourself as a confident person?

What do you dislike about yourself? What are your weaknesses?

How do you think your mother/father would describe you?

In what ways do you think your mother influences your confidence in yourself? How does your mother influence how you feel about yourself as a woman? As a Black woman?

In what ways do you think your father influences your confidence in yourself? How does your father influence how you feel about yourself as a woman? As a Black woman?

FAMILY STRUCTURE

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your family life. I'm interested in hearing how you understand your family and family members.

Please do not to give identifying information (parents, partners, etc.).

Tell me a story that is a good example of what your family was like when you were growing up.

Do you feel your parents were prepared to start a family? How old were your parents when they first married/got together? Had their first child? Had you?

How did you parents' relationship change when they had children?

Describe the places you lived and the types of homes you lived in as a child. How often did you move when you were growing up? [Probe to see if parents owned the house, if rented, or lived in public housing] Why did you move?

Some families find it difficult to make ends meet. How would you describe your family's financial situation when you were growing up? Did your family ever receive Food Stamps or welfare when you were growing up?

How often do you talk to or have contact with relatives (grandparents) on your mother's side of the family? On your father's side of the family?

How would you describe the quality of your relationships with your grandparents on your mother's side of the family? How about your aunts, uncles, and cousins on that side of the family?

How would you describe the quality of your relationships with your grandparents on your father's side of the family? How about your aunts, uncles, and cousins on that side of the family?

How often did you hear from your father, as a child?

How did your mother talk about your father? How did extended family members talk about your father? How did your father talk about your mother? Does your father respect your mother?

RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your parents. I'm interested in hearing how you understand your relationship with your parents.

Please do not to give identifying information (parents, partners, etc.).

Tell me about your mother. How would you describe her personality? What types of jobs, if any, did your mother have when you were growing up? Does she work now? What does she do?

As far as you know, did/does your mother have any health concerns or struggle with issues related to mental health or drugs and alcohol? If yes, tell me more about how this influenced your family life. [Probe for past/present]

Tell me about your father. How would you describe her personality? What types of jobs, if any, did your father have when you were growing up? Does he work now? What does he do? [Probe for past/present]

As far as you know, did/does your father have any health concerns or struggle with issues related to mental health or drugs and alcohol? If yes, tell me more about how this influenced your family life.

Describe the quality of your relationship with your mother. How do you feel about it? Share a story with me that is a good example of you relationship with your mother.

Describe the quality of your relationship with your father. How do you feel about it? Share a story with me that is a good example of you relationship with your father

Tell me about the typical types of activities that you do/did with your mother (during childhood and as an adult)?

Tell me about the typical types of activities that you do/did with your father (during childhood and as an adult)?

How did your parents divide parental duties/responsibilities? Who do you feel set the rules? Who do you feel enforced them? In your opinion, which parent did most of the disciplining? Advice giving? Outings?

What financial expectations do you have of your parents?

What is your most positive memory with your father? What is your most negative memory of your father?

Tell me about the quality of your parents' relationship? How well do/did they get along?

Divorce, separation, and single parenthood are common in the black community. Why do you think your parents aren't together? [if father lived outside of household] How do you think, if at all, your family adjusted to not having a father present in the household?

Divorce, separation, and single parenthood are common in the black community. What holds your family together? [if biological parents remained married her entire childhood]?

How do you think having/not having your biological father living in the household influenced you? How do you think life would have been different with (out) your father in the household? Please describe an instance in your life that you think would've been different with(out) your father [say opposite of actual father residential status0?

What difficult life experiences do you think your father has faced? Which ones do you think are related to how he fathers? Describe a time when this was obvious.

Do you feel your father is the same or different from most fathers? Why or why not?

Is your father as a good father? Why? Describe a time that your father was/wasn't a good father.

Do you think that Black fathers face special obstacles to being fathers? What about to being good fathers? Why or why not? [Probe how father fits w/ the answer]

FRIENDSHIPS/PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your friends and other personal relationships. Again, I am interested in hearing how you understand your friends. **Please do not to give identifying information (parents, partners, etc.).**

Tell me about the quality of your closest friendships.

Tell me about the quality of your non-romantic relationships with men.

Did your mother talk to you about love? About choosing romantic partners? About sex? What was the typical content of those conversations? What are things that you think you picked up from your mother based upon her actions or indirect commentary on love, relationships, men, or sex? Do you talk to your mother about people you like? How important is your mother's opinion?

Did your father talk to you about love? About choosing romantic partners? About sex? What was the typical content of those conversations? What are things that you think you picked up from your father based upon his actions or indirect commentary on love, relationships, men, or sex? Do you talk to your father about people you like? How important is your father's opinion?

In what ways do you think your relationship with your father influences your relationships with men? With romantic partners? With any relationship? Give an example.

Have you had any romantic relationships? If yes → Describe your first romantic relationship. Describe your worst romantic relationship. Describe your best romantic relationship. Describe your most recent romantic relationship. What was your chief motivation for entering into those relationships? If no → Tell me about any casual relationships you may have had in which you interacted with or felt more than friendship for someone.

What do you like best about those dating situations?

Do you have a partner? Tell me about the quality of the relationship. Describe a typical interaction. What do your friends (siblings) think about your relationship? What do your parents think about your relationship?

Tell me about how you act in your romantic relationships? What is your level of commitment in these relationships?

How important is sexuality to you in your relationships? How old were you when you participated in your first sexual activity? What has been good/bad about sexuality in your relationship? How would you describe your level of sexual activity? Do you "hook-up" or "mess around." Describe your comfort level with engaging in friendships or platonic relationships with people of the same gender(s) with which you are sexually attracted? Describe your comfort level with engaging in dating relationships?

Do you have any sexual experiences that you regret? How do you deal with this? Why do you think it occurred? [Only if respondent is comfortable with this line of questioning]

Do you engage in risky behaviors? [Probe for drugs, alcohol, risky sexual behaviors]

WOMANHOOD AND FATHERHOOD

How important is it to you to get married? Why? [If it is important] At what time in your life would you like to marry? Why? How important is it to you to have children? [If it is important] At what time in your life would you like to have children? Why?

Thinking back on your childhood, would you say your family is the ideal family? [Ask respondent to give current feelings as well as how would have answered growing up]

Describe what would be your ideal family in the future? Black husband? What role do you see your current family members playing in this ideal family?

Single motherhood is common in the African-American community. There are differing opinions on single mothering. Tell me your thoughts about single mothering. [Probes: Could you see yourself being a single mother? Why or why not?]

What is a “good woman”. What is a “strong woman?” Do you feel you fit these characteristics? How? In what ways, if at all, is a father necessary for a woman to become the type of woman you just described?

What is your definition of a good father? Does a good father have to live in the same household as his child? Why or Why not?

Do you feel that daughter-father relationships are the same as father-son relationships? Why or why not?

Do you feel that having a good relationship with your biological father is necessary in order to have healthy dating or nonromantic relationships with men? Why or Why not?

What role do your religious preferences play in how you think about family and sex?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Why did you decide to participate in this project?

Is there any other information that you would like to share or think is important for me to know?

Appendix G
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Follow-up interview

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the follow-up interview. Please remember not to give identifying information (parents, partners, etc.).

ACADEMIC

Why so involved (K-12)?

Why grades dropped in college? Why fewer activities?

FEELINGS ABOUT YOURSELF

FAMILY STRUCTURE

How does your mother feel about her relationship with her father?

How does your father feel about his relationship with his father?

RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS

What strategies do you recall your parents using to create a cohesive family unit?
(Probe for specific examples or memories)

How did you parents' relationship change when they had children?

How often did you hear from your father, as a child?

Did you ever ask about your father?

How did your mother talk about your father? How did extended family members talk about your father? How did your father talk about your mother? Does your father respect your mother?

What difficult life experiences do you think your father has faced? Which ones do you think are related to how he fathers? Describe a time when this was obvious.

Describe your relationship with your Father figures. Share a story that is a good example of this interaction.

In what ways did/does your father show you affection?

Open to reconnecting w/ your father?

Would you tell your father personal things?

How important is it for you to have a connection w/ your father's family?

Have you had a frank conversation w/ your father about how you feel? Would you do it?

[For respondents in single-mother-headed households] Were there pictures of your father in the house? Where were they?

How affectionate is your father?

Can you go to your father for advice?

Describe a time when you felt most like a daughter to your father? [adult and growing up]

Did you ever do joint activities with both parents? with your parents separately?

FRIENDSHIPS/PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Do you talk to your mother about people you like? How important is your mother's opinion?

Do you talk to your father about people you like? How important is your father's opinion?

What do you like best about your dating experiences?

What do you like least about your dating experiences?

Do you have any sexual experiences that you regret? How do you deal with this? Why do you think it occurred? [Only if respondent is comfortable with this line of questioning]

Do you engage in risky behaviors? [Probe for drugs, alcohol, risky sexual behaviors]

How do you think your relationship with your father influences your romantic relationships? (Probe for specific examples or memories)

How do you think your relationship with your father influences your expectations about your ideal family? (Probe for specific examples)

How do you think your relationship with your father influences your general feelings about men? (Probe for specific examples or memories)

How important is it to you to have a Black husband? What type of men do you mostly date? [Probe for personality and race]

When you were growing up did you know of any healthy relationships?
Would you date someone that has characteristics like your father?

WOMANHOOD AND FATHERHOOD

What role do you see your current family members playing in this ideal family?
Would you like your father around in your future family?

Does a good father have to live in the same household as his child? Why or Why not?

Do you feel that daughter-father relationships are the same as father-son relationships? Why or why not?

Do you feel that having a good relationship with your biological father is necessary in order to have healthy dating or nonromantic relationships with men? Why or Why not?

What do you think is unique about the daughter-father relationship?
Important for father to live in household?
What is the “male perspective?”
What role should fathers play in their adult children’s life?

What do you think when you hear strong black woman?
Do you think single mother when you hear strong black woman?
Do you feel like you being a female is related to how he interacts with you?
Do you think your father has regrets about how he fathers?
How do you define father?
What are things fathers should do?
What role do your religious preferences play in how you think about family and sex?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the last interview I asked you if you think your father is a good father. Do you still have the same answer as last time? If no, why? If yes, why?

Are there any topics you would like to discuss in further detail?

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